

AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

OCT. ~ 1923

20 CTS

Izola Forrester
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If You Want Bigger Pay *Make This* **FREE TEST**

There's a sure way to increase your earning power. And here is such an opportunity. Look into it—you may recognize it as your one chance to earn the biggest money of your life.



ARE you ready for a shock? Then, let me tell you that if you have average intelligence and can read and write, there is a quick and easy way for you to earn enough money to satisfy any average ambition. And after reading this offer, if you do not quickly make more money, you have no one to blame but yourself.

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October
1923

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. LII
No. 2

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YOU can make \$15 to \$60 weekly in your spare time writing show cards. No canvassing or soliciting. We instruct you by our new simple Directograph system, pay you cash each week and guarantee you steady work. Write for full particulars and free booklet.

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YOU CAN earn \$1 to \$2 an hour writing show cards at home in your spare time. Quickly and easily learned by our new simple "Instructograph" method. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how, guarantee you steady work at home, no matter where you live, and pay you cash each week. Full particulars and booklet free. Write to-day.

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You, Too, Can Play the HAWAIIAN GUITAR

Just as the Natives Do—

After Your FIRST LESSON You Will Play "ALOHA". We Guarantee That—

Our method is so simple, interesting and appealing that you begin in your first lesson to learn the famous Hawaiian Folk Song "ALOHA". Think how happy you will be when you surprise your friends by playing the fascinating Hawaiian Guitar just as the natives do!

Only Four Motions— and You Master Them Quickly!

In a few minutes you acquire the four motions necessary to play any piece—after that a short period of practice and you will have mastered this swiftly, sweet music. Complete course of 10 lessons includes: First beautiful Hawaiian Guitar, necessary picks, steel bar, etc. No extras.

No Previous Musical Knowledge Necessary

If you never read a musical note in your life—if you haven't even the slightest knowledge of music, we can quickly and positively teach you to play this wonderfully popular instrument. Don't be just a "listener" when you can easily be the center of interest among your friends.

Just Mail a Post Card for Details

of our remarkable FREE Hawaiian Guitar Offer—

simply write: "I am interested"—what do I need?

Address

First Hawaiian Conservatory

of Music, Inc.

Box 29, 225 Broadway

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New York City

Special arrangements for lessons if you have your own Hawaiian Guitar.



"\$60 more a month!"

"LAST night I came home with great news—a \$60 increase in salary! I took the money out of my pocket and asked Mary to count it. You should have seen her face light up when she found the extra \$60. I think she was even happier than I was, for it was the third increase in a year.

"Today I am manager of my department—earning more money than I ever thought it would be possible for me to make. I owe it all to the training I received from the International Correspondence Schools. That little coupon was the means of changing my whole life."

How much longer are you going to wait before taking the step that is bound to bring you more money? Isn't it better to start now than to wait for years and then realize what the delay has cost you?

One hour after supper each night spent with the I. C. S. in your own home will prepare you for the position you want in the work you like best.

Don't let another priceless hour go to waste! Without cost or obligation, let us prove that we can help you. Mark and mail this coupon.

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Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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\$5 to \$20 Dollars a week for your Spare Time

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Write to-day for Illustrated Booklet and Free Working Outfit.

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Great Shops of Coyne complete in 3 1/2 months. \$100,000 worth of electrical equipment.

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WANTED—Railway Postal Clerks

Travel—See the country

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18 UP

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The Long, Long Trail

By GEORGE OWEN BAXTER

A WESTERN story in which Western folk will recognize a number of good friends, and a few bad ones, too.

Morgan Valentine, the rancher, sure had his hands full of trouble. There were certain incidental ones, like a pair of great hulking sons who were quick on the draw, but the heaviest cross he had to bear was *Mary*, who had been confided to his tender care by his beloved brother.

Then, as if to fill his measure of trouble to overflowing, poor *Morgan* leads to his home a bandit who has just robbed him of his ranch pay roll. *Mary* and the bandit meet, and the story begins.

Whether you like Western stories or not, this particular one will occupy all your attention while you are reading it. After having ranged the open places with the characters in it, you are going to deliver yourself of the verdict—"The best story I have read in years!"

Price, \$1.75 net

CHELSEA HOUSE, Publishers

79 Seventh Avenue :: :: New York City



PLAY PIANO BY EAR

Be a Jazz Music Master

Anyone who can remember a tune can easily and quickly learn to play popular jazz or American rhythm by ear at a very small cost. The New Niagara Method makes piano playing wonderfully simple.

No matter how little you know about music—even though you “have never touched a piano”—if you can just remember a tune, you can quickly learn to **play by ear**. I have perfected an entirely new and simple system. It shows you so many little tricks that it just comes natural to pick out on the piano any piece you can hum. Beginners and even those who could not learn by the old fashioned method grasp the Niagara idea readily, and follow through the entire course of twenty lessons quickly. Self-instruction—no teacher required. You learn many new styles of bass, syncopation—blues, fill-ins, breaks and trick endings. It's all so easy—so interesting that you'll be amazed.

A Simple Secret to Success

No need to devote years in study to learn piano nowadays. Special talent unnecessary. Every lesson is so easy, so fascinating that you just “can't keep your hands off the piano.” Give it part of your spare time for 90 days and you will be playing and entertaining almost before you realize it. No tiresome scales, no arpeggios to learn—nodo-re-mi—no difficult lessons or meaningless exercises. You learn a bass accompaniment that applies to the songs you play. Once learned, you have the secret for all time—your difficulties are over and

Learn at home in 90 days

You Become Master of the Piano

Even talented musicians are amazed at the rapid progress of Niagara School students and can't understand why this method was not thought of years ago. Naturally, the Niagara Method is fully protected by copyrights and cannot be offered by any other school. A special service department gives each pupil individual attention.

Be Popular in Every Crowd

One who can sit down at any time without notes or music, reel off the latest jazz and popular song-hits that entertain folks, is always the center of attraction, the life of the party, sought after and invited everywhere. Make yourself the center of attraction—master the piano by spending an hour a day studying the fascinating Niagara Method.

As easily as thousands of others have learned, so you too, can learn and profit—not only through the pleasure it provides, but also by playing at dances, motion picture houses and other entertainments.

Decide to Begin Now!

Just spend a part of your spare time with a few easy, fascinating lessons and see how quickly you “catch on” and learn to play. You will be amazed, whether you are a beginner or an advanced student. Write for interesting, illustrated booklet, “The Niagara Secret”—it describes this wonderful new method of playing piano by ear. **This booklet sent FREE.**

Ronald G. Wright, Director, NIAGARA SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Niagara Falls, N. Y.



This Book FREE

CLIP THIS COUPON NOW

Niagara School of Music, Dept. 589, Niagara Falls, N. Y.
Without obligation mail me your booklet, “The Niagara Secret.”

Name.....
St. and No. or R. F. D.....
Town..... State.....
Age..... Ever take piano lessons?..... How many?.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

\$25.00 in cash

**given to readers of this
magazine each month**

The Publishers invite the readers to select the best advertisement in this issue. \$15.00 will be paid to the reader who sends in the best criticism or suggestion. \$5.00 will be paid the reader who sends in the 2nd best criticism or suggestion. \$3.00 will be paid the reader who sends in the 3rd best criticism or suggestion. \$2.00 will be paid the reader who sends in the 4th best criticism or suggestion.

This contest costs you nothing to enter—there are no conditions or rules to be complied with—simply read over the advertisements in this magazine and write us which advertisement you like best, and why you think it convinces the reader of its worth.

Contest for this issue closes November 1, 1923

Please address all letters to

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION

79 Seventh Avenue

New York City

What Do You Call an Opportunity?

IN my lifetime I have heard many men speak of opportunity. I have read some very fine definitions of this wonder-word. It has been the subject of many splendid speeches; authors have written abundantly about it in prose and poetry.

You have said, "I wish I had an opportunity."

But I am wondering what you call an opportunity.

Do you—as so many do—mistakenly associate it with "good fortune" or "good luck"?

Suppose tomorrow you heard of a \$10,000 position seeking a man. Could you fill it? If so, it would be an opportunity. If not, it would be no opportunity at all so far as you are concerned. It would be merely a bit of information from which you could not benefit.

Opportunity, I believe, is usually a recognition of worth.

The biggest opportunity that can ever come to you will never be any bigger than your preparation—your worth-whileness.

If you are not worth considering, Opportunity won't give you a thought.

The biggest job of all the big jobs open and

filled in the last twenty-four hours would have been an opportunity for you—

—if you had been prepared.

And I am not one who believes that Opportunity knocks but once.

The hundreds of opportunities which are here to-day will come again to-morrow—

—if you are prepared.

But you can be sure they will never be found on the door-steps of worthless prospects—men who are not ready.

Opportunity seeks and finds only those who have paid the price of preparation. She does not pick men as

you pick a number from a lottery; neither does she cover up what she has to offer. Her gifts are an open book—yours from which to choose.

Pick the thing you want, and get ready for it. Opportunities do not come except as you attract them. LaSalle training offers a sure way to increase your powers of attraction.

Just bear in mind that the biggest opportunity that can ever come to you will never be greater than

your preparation.

John M. LaSalle
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The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

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LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY Dept. 1065-R CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Please send me catalog and full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your booklet, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

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Falcon of Squawtooth

By ARTHUR PRESTON HANKINS

THE *Falcon* is a product of the Western construction camp. From the time he drifts into a cheerful company gathered around a certain camp fire, he is caught up by force of circumstances and hurled into the thick of a mighty interesting story.

Falcon is a man's man. His friend, *Halfaman Daisy* runs him a close second when it comes to manhood, and as to *Canby's* daughter, *Manzanita*, when some one said that she was a remarkable young woman, *Canby* replied, "She's worse than that."

However, she is a perfectly nice, lovable girl, even if it is hard sometimes for her father to locate her.

Price, \$1.75 net

CHELSEA HOUSE, PUBLISHERS

79 Seventh Avenue :: :: New York City

\$90 Drafting Course FREE

There is such an urgent demand for practical, trained Draftsmen that I am making this special offer in order to enable deserving, ambitious and bright men to get into this line of work. I will teach you to become a Draftsman and Designer until you are **Drawing a salary of \$250.00 a month.** You need not pay me for my personal instruction or for the complete set of instruments. **But you must take advantage of this special offer at once.**

\$300 a Month Salary— \$450 on the Side at Home!



Chief Draftsman Dobe

That's the kind of money my drafting students make. Read what this one says:

"As a beginner I am doing fine. Am earning a salary of \$300 per month, besides I made over \$450 at home the last two months, drawing plans for private parties. The practical drafting training you gave me by mail put me where I am in less than six month's study. Thank you for all your personal interest and help you gave me so far."

(Signed) J. B.

(Name and address upon request)

I Guarantee

**To Train You Until You Are
Placed in a Position Paying
up to \$250 and \$300 a Month**

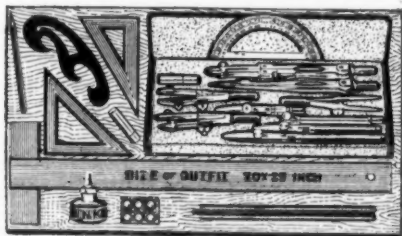
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No matter what plans you have for the future. Get this great book—"Successful Draftsmanship." Find out about the simply marvelous opportunities ahead now. How the world needs draftsmen, engineers, architects and builders. What great salaries and possibilities there are! Send coupon for free book today.

Chief Draftsman, Engineers Equipment Co.
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This \$25 Outfit FREE

And more—I give you a whole set of drafting tools the minute you become my student. You get every tool you need. A magnificent set of instruments which will build your success in draftsmanship.

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Without any obligation whatsoever, please mail your book, "Successful Draftsmanship", and full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to few students.

Name.....

Address.....

Post Office.....State.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

QUEMADO

By WILLIAM WEST WINTER

WHEN *Quemado* breezed into town, *Jake Castro*, standing on the porch of the hotel, passed this remark:

"Here comes that hell-fired maldito, *Quemado*. He is jingling in with a bolero on and velvet pants. Judging from the hilarity in his wake, I reckon he is saying Spanish things that would make a French artist's model faint with shame."

From this it is apparent that both *Quemado* and *Jake* are characters. The former continues to prance through one adventure after another, breathless and exciting as only adventures in the West can be.

Young, irresistible, mysterious *Quemado* and his story constitute most refreshing bits of Western fiction.

Price, \$1.75

CHELSEA HOUSE, *Publishers*
79 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY



\$215.00 In One Day

New Invention Sweeping Country Like Wildfire!

NO wonder this amazing new invention is bringing fortunes to agents. All over the whole country this new device is doing away with old-fashioned methods of heating with coal stoves, ranges and furnaces. Already over \$1,000,000 worth have been sold.

You can readily understand why this new invention—the Oliver Oil-Gas Burner—is sweeping over the country like wildfire. It does away with

all the expense of coal—making every stove and every furnace a modern oil-gas burner. Saves money, time and drudgery. Three times the heat of any other method. No wonder agents are riding in on the tide of big Oliver profits!

OLIVER Salesmen Making Big Money

These men know the secret of big money. They know a good thing when they see it and they know that the time is ripe for this new Oliver improved Oil-Gas Burner. They know that this age of high-priced coal and wood makes it necessary for some substitute. They see ships and locomotives being run by oil and big buildings being heated by it. And they know that

an invention that makes use of this cheap fuel for every home—and yet does it so as to give more heat than coal or wood—is the thing they want to tie up to.

Big Profits Quickly Made

You too can use this secret of big money. You do not need to be a high-powered salesman. The Oliver's amazing features sell for you. When people see it they know at once that it is the thing they want. You will realize that this is a proposition that will pay you as big money as it does them. We have a definite number of open territories which we are ready to dispose of to those who act quickly. Every territory allotted is filled with big-money opportunities. And this big money comes easily. Because not only does this invention practically sell itself on sight but when you have sold one this one will sell several others as soon as your customer's friends and neighbors see it. And thru our special plan you get credit and commissions for every sale in your territory.

You can also make big money just by using your spare time. Note how N. B. Chelan made \$43 in one evening.

Coupon Brings Full Offer

If you want to make at least \$5,000 a year easily, mail this coupon now for our offer. We are not making any extravagant claims about this. We do not have to. We believe that your common sense will indicate a good proposition to you when you know about it. We want to give you the facts. Won't you write us? And by doing so quickly you will be allotted an exclusive territory with private selling rights.

The coupon will bring you the facts and will save you writing a letter. But mail the coupon at once.

OLIVER OIL-GAS BURNER CO. 2412-V Oliver Bldg., ST. LOUIS, MO.
Canadian Distributor, 2412-V Oliver Bldg., Toronto, Ont.

SAYS F. W. Bentley of Philadelphia

"Yes, Code—seems sell! I made \$215 today!"

Buys Car with Profits
"Have earned enough in one month to buy me a new auto."

\$7 Profit per Hour
"Started out and made \$21.50 in about 3 hours. The Oliver does the work, it certainly is the real thing."

"Sells Like Beer in a Dry Town."

"Am sending today for 7 Oliver. This is one day's orders (\$85 profit). Selling like beer in a dry town."

Mr. T's 28th Order in Six Months

"Ship 12 Oliver: 10 No. 20; 2 No. 12 No. 2; 24 No. 4. (Mr. T's profit on this order alone is \$711)."

Russel Earned \$3300 in Five Months

"Have averaged \$660 profit a month for last six months."

Carnegie—\$1000 a Month

"Am making \$1000 per month. I have made but money before but did not expect so much. Your Burner is just the thing."

Berger—\$258.50 per Week

"Send following weekly letter: after 10 No. 12 No. 2; 4 No. 8."

\$11.75 in Ten Minutes

"I took order for a neighbor, \$11.75 profit in ten minutes."

\$43 in One Evening

"I made \$43 last night selling Oliver Burner."

N. B. Chelan, Wash.

Oliver Oil-Gas Burner Co.

2412-V Oliver Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Please send me full facts about how I can make at least \$5,000 a year representing you in my territory. Also your plan if I just wish to make big money in my spare time.

Name.....

Address.....

It Sells Itself

Agents find it no work at all to sell this amazing invention—the Oliver new improved Oil-Gas Burner. They just show it—taking only one minute to connect it—then light it. And the sale is made! This new invention is its own salesman. It sells itself! The Oliver Oil-Gas Burner is the most timely thing that could be put out. It dispenses entirely with coal and wood when both are now high-priced. It burns the cheapest fuel—oil. It saves a woman work now in times when she is looking for just such things. Just as much or as little heat as wanted, off and on instantly by simply turning a valve.

The Secret of Big Money

Of course, now that you know the facts you yourself can understand why this

new invention is going over like wildfire! And you can understand why F. W. Bentley made \$215 in one day. Why J. Carnegie made \$1,000 in one month and why hundreds of other agents are cleaning up big too.

ONLY
\$3
DOWN
and you
keep this
typewriter



DIRECT
to you
from our
Factory

Big Saving
In Price

Yes, we will ship you this Genuine Underwood

Rebuilt in our own factory just like new for
ONLY \$3 down—NOT ONE CENT MORE
Until you have tried the machine 10 full days at our expense

This is the genuine Underwood Typewriter. We offer you the same three models of the Underwood Typewriter being made and sold by the manufacturers today. **Standard 4-row single shift keyboard.** Absolutely visible writing—the full line of type-writing is visible at all times. All the improvements and attachments that any high grade typewriter ought to have.

BIG SAVING TO YOU

Our plan of selling to you direct makes possible enormous savings, which are all for your benefit. **Send in the coupon and we will send you prepaid our big catalog, including "A Trip Through Our Factory."** This shows how the Shipman-Ward Rebuilt Underwood is the best that can be produced at our **Special Price.**

Write Now

and learn how it is possible for us to ship you this Underwood Typewriter upon our **free trial plan** and our **direct-to-you money saving methods.** Get the full details now—just sign the coupon and mail today. Get all the facts—then decide.

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—to buy. You don't have to order. **Just sign the coupon,** send it to us and we will mail you our **big catalog absolutely free.** You will be amazed at the liberality of our offer, the beauty and all around excellence of our typewriters.

From Factory to You
Send the Coupon Today

You 10 Days' Free Trial

don't have to do anything to get our big **FREE** catalog and complete details of our amazing typewriter offer. **Just sign and send in the coupon.** There is no obligation.

You have ten full days in which to try the typewriter before deciding whether you want to keep it. Give it every test—see for yourself—make the Underwood prove its worth to you. Don't take our word for it—put the Underwood before you and see if you don't think it the greatest typewriter bargain ever offered.



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EVERY MACHINE is fully guaranteed. New parts wherever needed. **New casing, new nickel, new lettering, new platen, new key rings—a complete, perfect typewriter.** Impossible to tell it from a brand new Underwood either in appearance, durability or quality of finished work.

An up-to-date machine with two-color ribbon, back spacer, stencil device, automatic ribbon reverse, tabulator, etc. In addition we furnish **FREE** waterproof cover and special Touch Typewriter instruction book. You can learn to operate this Underwood in one day.

Big Book FREE

Our big handsomely illustrated catalog will be sent **free** on request. It tells you all about the advantages of owning a **STANDARD SIZE UNDERWOOD**; how and why this machine will last for years, saving many dollars not only in the purchase price but in its operation.

Send in the coupon and let us send you this beautifully illustrated book **FREE** without any obligation whatever.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

SHIPMAN-WARD MFG. CO.
2637 Shipman Bldg., Chicago

Please send me **FREE**, all charges fully prepaid, your **BIG NEW** catalog of **UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITERS** and complete details of your **FREE TRIAL Offer.**

It is understood that I am under no obligation whatever and that this is to be sent without one cent of cost to me.

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Tide of the Tavenners

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"The Market Place," etc.

CHAPTER I.

M ADELAINE FLEMING awoke with a feeling of suffocation. It was as though the wind, which ever since her arrival on the island of Mayou two months before had blown fresh and sweet from the sea, was being drawn back again, sucked into the mighty reservoir of space from which it had come.

She was not a woman to be easily frightened. For ten years, since, as a girl of eighteen, she had made her initial hunt for tigers with her father in India, she had pursued and watched the various phenomena of nature in strange places of the earth, and always with the calm detachment, the outward disinterest, which distinguishes an habitual British traveler.

But there was a suggestion of something more than nature breathing away the air from the windows of her wide-porched house that morning. The very spirit of the little mid-Pacific island, having for two months expelled its gentle and life-giving breath, seemed now to be drawing a mighty inhalation of forces to itself, forces of occult and direful portent.

Touching the gold-and-enamel button at her bedside, she summoned her native maid. The girl came bearing a tray with chocolate, and bread, and but-

ter wrapped in wet leaves to keep it cool. An expression, partly of trepidation, partly of mystery, and partly of the natural gossip's eagerness to impart information to strangers, was written upon her face.

"Madame," she began murmuringly when she had set the tray upon a table and drawn a chair of plaited, white reeds before it, "the wind of the Tavenners blows once more, and the tide of the Tavenners runs out."

As abruptly as she had summoned her Madelaine dismissed the little servant. She held herself into her chair until the soft, rush-soled shoes had whispered their way down the long open corridor of the house and out onto the grasses of the courtyard, then she went to the window and drew back the frail curtain that hung limp in the breathless air.

The house she had taken upon her arrival at Mayou stood away from the little city of Alol and back of the coral cliff, which, belting the island, held its soil and rich verdure and mountains and waters as the rim of a porcelain dish might hold some miniature garden of an artist's fashioning. She was above the sea and close beside the sea. Yet, except far out where deep waters provided a roadstead for ships, she could see nothing of it because of the screen

of banana palms and pepper trees which shielded the bottom of her garden from the road.

Her heart was beating intolerably, beating as it always beat now at the mention of Philip Tavenner's name, and the same indescribable hunger to know every detail of his life and history, that had tortured her for weeks, began its gnawing at her dignity, her lifelong custom of aloofness, her innate distaste for interference in the affairs of others. Given her familiar sense of well-being, she might have downed that hunger once more. But now, added to the trepidation of her spirit, a sort of terror and reaching out for association came upon her. As instinctively as those of lesser civilization seek to herd, she sought the company of her kind.

She dressed hurriedly and she sent for the Japanese chauffeur, who, along with the toylike machine that he drove, had been rented out to her by a native princess who had returned gratefully to her litter, borne on the shoulders of giant carriers from inland.

"The club, Hetsu," she said.

He touched his cap and shook his head with an air of omiscience.

"Very grave sorrowful," he apologized. "No can make 'em old road; no can make 'em new road. Stones old road he all gone up new road top side cliff. Very bad road. Maybe somebody go over some time—you see. Anyway, not finish. Men no work tide day. You know 'em, Mista Tavenner's tide?"

She was glad, after all, to walk. Used to exercise, her being resumed some semblance of its balance once blood began to flow through her veins, and her lungs filled themselves, even with vitiated air. Then, too, when she passed the screen of green at the garden's end she saw the sea. It had not a particularly alarming look. It had receded beyond the usual beach line perhaps a mile, perhaps more. But she had witnessed extreme low tides on

every coast touched by salt water, and, except that the beach dwellers of Mayou appeared in no panic lest the inward wave which must follow so marked a recession would bring havoc along with it, she saw no difference between this low tide and any other.

She even became interested in the new cliff road she was following. Coming up onto a particularly menacing shelf—that shelf to which Hetsu had doubtless been referring when he spoke with such dogmatic misgiving—she noted that, in engineering a grade for automobiles instead of the old-time litters which had made the lower road possible, a very bad turn had been necessary. It was more of a switchback than a turn. It jutted out onto a promontory which hung above space and water by means of a backward-slanting bracket of coral and granite; the turn was to be negotiated by means of a short subsidiary spur of road, which provided a place for cars of any great length to back and head at a wide angle onto the descent.

"It is a very bad place," she remarked to herself. "Hetsu was correct." And she stepped onto the crushed-coral surfacing of the spur and looked down at the natives gathered upon the beach below.

Workmen from the road, fishermen, pearl divers from the camps on the West Wind shore, mothers with their children, dancing girls from Alol—in fact representatives of the whole non-European population, except for the stoical Orientals laboring in the cane fields around the great feudal houses farther back from the shore—were gathered there, lounging or sitting or standing close to the old tide line.

But no sound of singing, such as was usual when these gentle people of the sun were gathered together, arose. They were untroubled—but waiting. Waiting as the air was waiting, as she was waiting. The disquietude of an hour before returned upon her. She

must reach people. She must know what spirit hovered over and sucked upon the island. She must feel the comfort of companionship. She must know what was meant by the tide of the Tavenners.

She hastened her steps along the unfinished road and came down to the club on the beach at Alol.

Aside from the governor's palace and the British consulate, the club was the dominating institution of the island. There were other clubs, to be sure, just as there were other consulates. But when one spoke of the consulate or the club there was no confusion in the mind of the listener as to the place meant.

Madelaine almost ran up the steps of the club. But once she was there, with the sound of voices around her, her old instinct for keeping distance between herself and others revived.

Early as the day was the veranda was bright with frocks, and the gold buttons of uniforms shone out of the dimness of the big room beyond. A British gunboat had dropped in for a call the day before, and two American cruisers lay out in the stream. Usually all Alol would just have been waking in the cool shadows behind its closed shutters at this hour. But to-day every one seemed to have felt the same urge toward gregariousness that she had felt. The universality of the urge repelled her. She hunted for a secluded corner, and found a chair sheltered by a palm that grew up through the floor of the veranda, and cut off by the deep curtain of an awning.

Further fortifying her isolation by a half dozen of the magazines which had been brought by the gunboat the day before, she strove to master once more the breathlessness and suspense that oppressed her. She could not do it. She was waiting—waiting for something the nature of which she did not know.

And then Philip Tavenner came. She

saw his tall, almost stooped, figure at the end of the palm avenue leading up to the veranda, and she felt a flush burn along her fair skin up to the roots of her rich, blond hair.

He held his little daughter by the hand. Between the man and the child there was a unity so vital that even the vision of Madelaine Fleming embraced them as one. In the dark eyes of each were the same depths of weariness and patience, contradicted by the same smile around the mouth—a smile at once whimsical and poignant and gently amused. But physical sameness was not the essential resemblance between the two. Some shadowing of destiny seemed to lie upon them both, merging them into one. Some aura seemed to enclose them away from the other folk of the world.

And now as the man and the child came up the avenue together with the low tide behind them like a tablet upon which their story was to be written, Madelaine saw another likeness between them, and her heart, that had seemed to hang suspended in her breast, leaped. They were lonely. Both were lonely. And for two as lovable as Philip Tavenner and his child to be lonely meant that they were not loved.

Gossip, of course, was electric with conjecture as to Tavenner and his wife. She was ambitious and beautiful and hard with the hardness of her own flawlessness. Tavenner had been bred on the island, and the sweetness of its sun and mist was in his veins. She had married him and come to Mayou to coin the cane fields of Mayou into pounds sterling, and to return with them to England that she might rebuild the splendor from which the ancient family had fallen. He accepted the wealth that the lovely land had given him, and to that lovely land he proposed to give it back in architecture and happiness and schools. There was conflict between the two of them. But it was not enlivening

conflict that Madelaine Fleming saw written in the eyes of Philip Tavenner. It was loneliness—the loneliness of being unloved. Natalie Tavenner did not love her husband.

Relief as great as release from shame swept over Madelaine Fleming. It had been intolerable that another should feel for Philip Tavenner what she felt, should raise an altar to him in her soul as she had raised an altar.

She was covering her eyes with her lids to hide the thoughts back of them when the purring voice of little Madame Rinet sounded on her ears. Madame Rinet, descendent of a Portuguese sea rover, widow of a French consul at Mayou, and sister of Toli Diniz, who throve nobody knew how, nor inquired, was one of those thoroughly delightful women who use social arts apparently indiscriminately, yet never without a purpose.

Madelaine had no desire to be an open book for Matilde Rinet to read, and as she saw a China boy being directed to bring a deck chair—one of the delectable blue shade yonder—into her retreat, she had a premonition that she was about to be strapped, unetherized and raving, upon an operating table. She would have taken immediate flight, but, cenobitic as she was by nature, by training she was a gentlewoman. She would stay for a moment, pass a word or two, and then withdraw, either to some other secluded corner, or to her home upon the cliff.

But the first word of the intruder bound her.

"Philip," began Madame Rinet, stretching her very Parisian daintiness upon the becoming deck chair, "appears among us at the coming of the tide. While he waits for the thing it brings him he flees from the woman of marble who is insensitive to the things that float upon the air."

Not daring to risk her voice, nor yet to leave before she had heard more,

Madelaine watched Matilde fit a cigarette into a long holder of tortoise shell, and strike a match. Through the intensity of her preoccupation, she was conscious of some free part of her mind making note that the eyes of the little Portuguese were like tortoise, bright and yet dull, gleaming unexpectedly with gold. Matilde saw the concentration of the other upon her, and settled herself into her chair with a murmur of satisfaction.

"Will you smoke?" she asked as an afterthought, holding out a case, also of tortoise.

"Thanks. No." Hardly could Madelaine bite back the questions that crowded for expression. What was the tide of the Tavenners? What had it to do with Philip Tavenner?

As though her clairvoyance caught the questions, Matilde shot a smile from her cloudy, gleaming eyes.

"When I speak of the woman of marble, of a certainty it is understood by you, as by every one, that I speak of Madame Tavenner. For who else among all women has so much of perfection within herself that her heart feels no need to love another? Not one. Even I—even little Matilde Rinet, who is very, very cruel at the affections, as you will hear if you live long among us, Miss Fleming—even I love another. I speak of Toli Diniz, my brother. It sometimes happens in this world that a sister loves a brother, as I love Toli, with the passion of her life, with the passion of a mother."

"I had thought—Mrs. Tavenner—very admirable." Madelaine could have bitten her tongue for the cue it had given, and yet she had been powerless to prevent its utterance.

"Admirable! She is perfection!" Madame Matilde drew on her cigarette with relish. "Perfections are so rare that I recommend you, who are a pursuer of marvels around the world, to observe closely Philip Tavenner's wife."

"The air—is very strange to-day." Again Madelaine fought against a statement which was really a question, and again she was worsted.

Matilde Rinet put by her cigarette, opened a small gold-and-tortoise box, and regarded Madelaine for a moment in the mirror thus exposed. Then she repaired some minute damage to her complexion and settled herself once more in her chair.

"The education to which you are entitled in Mayou has been neglected," she said. "I hasten to make amends. It is for that—and for other things—that I have sought you out to-day."

That she *was* on an operating table, unable to move, Madelaine knew now. She, who had found no lack of resource within herself even when the emergencies of life spent in the wild places of the globe had been most pressing, was powerless now to defend herself, even to withdraw. To the things her tormentor let fall toward her like bait she must stay and listen, thereby confessing to the dull, gold-shot eyes the strait she was in. She found herself speculating, half in terror, half in hope, on Matilde Rinet. Was she a gossip and only a gossip? Was she merely a bored island dweller, who between boats from the world beyond was driven to amuse herself with mischief? Or had she a purpose, a motive commensurate with the intensity of her low and purring voice? As subtle as that voice?

"Long ago"—Matilde's accent was piquant with reminiscences of her Portuguese parentage and her French education—"long ago the first tide—such as that—made its journey to the sea." She waved a slim and heavily jeweled hand toward the beach. Madelaine's fascinated eyes followed the jewels upon that hand. Thick stones set in coppery gold. The legacy, perhaps, of that ancient pirate who had chanted litanies as he prodded his victims along the plank. What mercy could one ex-

pect from a hand that wore such symbols? And yet she could not flee from it. She had to stay; she had to know.

"And when it came back," Madame Matilde continued, "it came running swiftly but gently in, and, on the high plume of blue water that it carried above it, there rode a raft with a single passenger. That passenger was the first Tavenner. He settled upon the island and loved it and planted it and made it grow. From him—from those first cuttings for which he made a trip himself to India—comes all the cane that now grows here to make us wealthy. When I speak of 'wealthy' I speak of others, not Toli or myself. Three generations have followed the first Tavenner, sons after sons, and whenever an event of the first importance is about to come to one of them the tide runs out. Upon its return comes the event. Sometimes with its ebb the tide carries something of value to the Tavenners away. But always it returns with another gift more precious even than the thing it took. It is notable that when Philip Tavenner took himself to London and bought himself a wife the tide did not run. That she was not a gift and a blessing to him—"

"A tidal wave—" Desperately Madelaine forced herself to interrupt the thing that was about to be said.

Matilde smiled.

"There is never a tidal wave in Mayou," she said. "That which goes gently away comes gently back. Only around rocks that shoot into the sea is the water violent. But even there no damage is done, since the natives take tide day as a holiday, and sit upon the beach, waiting to see the thing that the water brings. We are quiet souls here, Miss Fleming. A quiet soul that welcomes a holiday is a great protection, as you will see if you live long among us. And you are going to live long among us." She leaned suddenly forward and fixed her gold-shot eyes upon Madelaine's

blue ones. "I have a mirror into the future, Miss Fleming. And I see—upon the blue plume of the oncoming water—the other half of Philip Tavenner's soul."

CHAPTER II.

Her mind and the muscles of her body leaped without Madelaine's consent. As sternly as she had brought down bolting horses Madelaine got them under control. But the effort weakened her. Now she had the summons of her will to go. But she could not go for the trembling that shook her. She lay back in her chair waiting for strength, commanding it to her aid. And as she lay there Matilde Rinet laughed, and, snapping open the lid of the little gold-and-tortoise box again, held it toward her.

"What do you see in my mirror?" she asked. "Look. Look at it, I say. You see hair like waving sunshine, eyes as blue as the skies under which they first opened, features as clear as though a master had carved them. What would Natalie Tavenner see if she, too, looked within my mirror? Something of a sameness so strange that she, too, might catch her breath. And yet—and yet—few see that sameness. Do you know why? It is because something greater than the beauty of the surface is in you. Natalie Tavenner is the casing, the husk—beautiful but still a husk—of a woman. Philip Tavenner saw the husk, and thought he married a woman within it. And at last when he has found that there is nothing—you come. You, whose soul is as rich as his. And the tide of the Tavenners begins to run."

"I must go." The protest, that Madelaine's sense of decency and dignity bade her utter, would not come. She had faced and driven back a hundred enemies in the wilds. But against the little purring creature of civilization that sat in the deck chair and smiled at her, she could find no weapon—except flight. And even flight hung back as though

weighted with lead. The jeweled hands and the jeweled eyes of Madame Matilde held her.

"You think it infamous—to be so frank?" inquired the small Portuguese. "It is the custom of you English, I know, to say nothing of the things that cry to be said, and so go on forever entangling the world in a snarl of silences. But I am of another people. I speak. I speak now because of Toli. The eyes of my Toli have fastened upon Madame Natalie. It is very foolish of Toli. To love a vase of good design and color would be more sensible. But we must take our Tolis as we find them. If I could break the shell of the woman and show him the emptiness within—but even that would do no good. Men of the blood of my brother care not at all that women are shells. They care only to possess them. It is only your sick Anglo-Saxons who go about forever hunting and mourning for the thing which is seldom there, and which gives no satisfaction when it is found. I cannot cure Toli of his love, and so his love must be given to him. You do not understand that either, perhaps? And being of the nation that knows not even that little thing, you think, perhaps, that men are strong—because they are strong. I know another thing, a deeper and more profound thing. I know that men are strong because they think they are strong. Toli has his way with such women as he has fastened his eyes upon—all but Natalie Tavenner. If he does not have his way with her, something will go out of my Toli. Strength will go out of him. Delilah will have shorn the locks of his confidence, and he will grind in the mills. I do not wish that to happen. It must not happen."

"Also there is another consideration. There is a woman of Japan. There is a tiny house on the West Wind shore which my brother has built. I do not care that my brother should build houses for women with yellow pigment under

their skin. In his joy of Natalie he will forget O-Toyo. Natalie is selfish and cold, but of two evils one chooses that which yields the most profit. I speak literally of profit. Encourage Philip Tavenner. Natalie has the pride of those who think only of themselves. Having no warmth of her own, she demands as implacably as a goddess that the voice of love shall at least appear to rise eternally toward her. She will take Toli to justify her pride before the world. Being more chaste than need be, she will divorce Philip and marry Toli, and she will have arranged that wealth shall not leave her with the name of Tavenner. We need wealth—Toli and I—the last two children of pirate ancestors, who always had wealth if they had to kill to get it. My brother will not suffer as your Philip suffers from the iciness of that woman of marble. When Toli has Natalie and her wealth he will bring warmth into her. He will break through the frosts with which she surrounds herself. He will do it with cruelty, if need be. Do you know that men of the race of my brother and myself beat women, if love can be inspired in no other way?"

Madeline was gone. She found a side door and took an old footpath to the cliff. She would come upon the new road at the promontory. Once more she was grateful to walk—to run—anything to get away. As though they were stairs, she climbed the coral notches of the cliff, without thought of strength or breath. And then as she reached the new road, thrusting its spur out to the edge of the shelf of rock, she found she had neither strength nor breath.

A subsidiary ledge of granite supporting a rich entablature of soil hung just below the ledge on which the spur was built. Orchidlike plants and ferns, parasitic upon the rotten stems of palms which had fallen from above and caught, grew to a height that would screen an extended body. She let herself down

upon the ledge. Flowers and ferns stirred and whispered as she came among them, then flowed together over her in a stream of color. She lay flat upon the rock with her face toward the sea.

How long she lay there, she did not know. Once she was conscious of the cool beat of wind upon her face, of a freshening in the space above and below and around her. Lifting herself a little, she saw that the far blue line of the ocean had become a scroll, a roll of turquoise silk unrolling itself toward her. The tide had turned. The exhalation of the spirit of Mayou played upon her, chill from the middle spaces of the world. The tide of the Tavenners was running in.

She dropped her head upon her arms and waited. Again she did not know how much of time had passed, when, dimly at first, and then more actively, she was aware of the sound of voices. She rose upon her knees, crept forward, and peered over the cliff. The persons from whom the voices came were hidden, were back under the bracketing of rock that held the ledge. She looked about. The natives who had lounged at the tide line had left the beach. The tide was running swiftly, slipping like silk up to the shore. A plume of white and blue rode steadily upon it. The wind which had been gentle before now beat upon her ears. It sang in the crags of the cliff.

Leaning far over her rocky support, she called to the hidden persons below. Her voice came back upon her and hit against the wall of granite behind. It did not carry down against the wind.

Remembering that even natives shunned rocks around which the water swirled at return tide, she gauged what time remained for escape to those below. The plume of blue and white was close now, so close that she could discern pieces of drift upon it, even catch the pattern of seaweed carried inward.

Running down from the rock upon which she knelt, she saw a frozen cataract of granite, holding in its curls patches of soil from which trailed vines, and to the spume of which deluvian years had deposited crusts of coral. There was foothold and hand hold for a way. From a lower level she could call again.

Against Matilde Rinet she had been weak. Against nature she was strong with the strength of an adventurer. She slipped from her shelter of ferns and orchids and found a rung of granite for her feet, a vine into which her hands could grip.

But she came to a place where the rungs of her ladder ceased, where the shelf dished in on its rock bracket. Clinging to the stem of her vine she swung herself out beyond the verdure that grew rank about her.

Two persons were there below: a man and a child. The man sat upon an ancient bit of wreckage. His back was to the sea. His face was sunk in his hands, which were clenched until blue showed at the knuckles.

"Philip!" she called. "Philip Tavenner."

So deeply was he sunk in the misery betrayed by every line of his body that even then he did not hear. The child looked up, caught by the voice that the wind rendered eerie. But she was a child whose world was peopled by fairies. They called. If you smiled, but did not answer, and went on playing, they stayed about you in the flowers, looking from the trunks of trees. She smiled. It was the whimsical, poignant smile of her father. Then she returned to the castle she was building from jeweled sand.

The water was so close now that already, at points farther along the beach, its plumed crest had shattered and flattened. In another moment it would sweep in around the rocks. Tavenner must be a strong swimmer. The

thought was wine to Madeleine Fleming's heart. But the child! With a child to cumber him, could he round the rocks? Or would he be dashed against them as he tried to save them both.

Rapidly Madeleine computed chances. One might not be able to save two. Two would certainly stand a better chance to save three. And the waters of five seas were familiar to her. She dared not dive. There was not sufficient depth for that. But the thin glazing of water below would break the force of a fall. The garments she wore were of silk which would not hold her back as she swam or struggled.

She pushed with her hand against the wall of rocks upon which she clung, swung herself out, loosed her hold upon the vine, and dropped.

She struck the crest of the wave as it came in. Beating it back from her eyes, she flung herself with it, mounted it.

The next she knew she was fighting, fighting beside Philip Tavenner toward the child. For a moment the dark, sleek little head lifted itself, and the strange, infantile eyes sought them. Then an eddy of water found its vortex in a rock and began to spin.

From the circumference of the whirlpool to which she had been flung Madeleine saw Tavenner in its center. The water had dragged down her hair. Her shoes were heavy. She kicked them loose and struck out toward him.

"Philip!" she called.

He dove. The raging surface of the water having covered the sleek, brown head of his child, he had gone into the depths to find her. Greater strength than she had ever known came to Madeleine's arms. She reached the spot where he had disappeared. She dove after him. She could not find him. When the blood in her head seemed about to burst from her eyes and ears she came up for breath. Then she went down again.

Distorted by the twisting currents of

the water, she saw Tavenner's shadow, saw the wraith of him following the floor of the whirlpool, holding himself to it by rock after rock, as he went hunting and hunting through that hideous grotto of death.

He had been down longer than man could stay and live. Clinging to swaying anchors of seaweed, Madelaine got to him and set her shoulder under his chin, preparatory to springing with him to the surface for air. He struck himself away from her, and began his search again. He would die there, die in the tide which was to have brought him its gift.

With all the strength of her body Madelaine flung herself against him. His head struck a sharp, up-standing rock. Faint red ran in a thin line from his head upward in the water. His form went limp. His hands relaxed the hold which had held him down. The woman set her shoulder under his chin again, and springing against the sand beneath her, she rose to the surface. The face of the sea was calm once more. Its anger of a moment before had dissolved into wrinkles of quiet mirth that ran about its rocks and slapped merrily at the cliff. Reaching one arm under the shoulders of the unconscious man, Madelaine found a clinging place for the other on the coral-and-granite bracket that held the shelf of rock. Men were already calling upon the beach. Boats were putting out.

It was late that night when she knew by the silence along the shore that the search for the little body had been given up. She was out beyond the screen of palms and pepper trees that shut away her garden. The moon had risen late and full and silvery white. Under it, with the wind that the tide had brought blowing her pale garments, she looked like a ghost, motionless upon the gleaming road.

She was waiting. He came stumbling, rushing toward her, and she took him as

wholly into her love as she would have taken a child that came to her in shame and agony.

"There," she whispered; "there." And couched his head upon her breast. "Madelaine," he answered her.

"There," she comforted him again. "There."

Words came from him, mumbling, tumbling, shaken words.

"I had forgotten the tide," he cried. "I was remembering the sound of your voice, telling over to myself every word my ears had heard you say. I had been doing it for days—for weeks. 'I think I had been doing it always, for my whole life through. Before I had ever heard you speak I had been listening, knowing what you would say when you came. And I forgot the tide—was deaf to the sound of it.'"

"Listen to me now," she said. "Can you listen to me now?"

"If I do not listen to you now, I shall die. That is why I have come."

"Then listen closely. I will leave Mayou in the morning. There is a boat for England, going by way of Suez. The captains of English boats are used to my idiosyncracies. This one will let me off at Maskat on the Gulf of Oman. From there I will find another boat to take me to El Bidia, and strike inland by camel train. There is a man at El Bidia whom I know. He will provide what I need and keep silent. His name is El Hadi, and he keeps a tavern. Remember those two things. Once, on a journey, I found a house in the Bahna Desert. El Hadi was with me, in charge of the train. It is a house built by a king for the girl he loved. The girl died, and the king died, and the house was forgotten. It is deep and cool and stands on the border of a ruined city. There is a watered garden that loses itself in the desert. I will be there waiting for you."

"Madelaine," was all the answer he could make to her. "Madelaine."

CHAPTER III.

News of the search for Madelaine Fleming reached Mayou on a boat that came into Alol some six months after she had hurriedly left that place. It came in the form of a letter from London to the British consul, urging that every bit of evidence collectable at that last point where the famous English traveler had made her residence should be forwarded to the colonial secretary. It carried the information that other consulates, embassies, and legations throughout the world had been given notification of the disappearance and were in possession of full descriptions of Miss Fleming and a full history of her life and wandering habits.

The next boat out brought newspapers and magazines with full accounts of Miss Fleming from the time she was taken from her French boarding school by her globe-trotting father, and returned to London with three tiger skins as a proof of her prowess as a sports-woman, up to her partially successful efforts to save the lives of Philip Tavenner, the well-known sugar planter of Mayou, and his little daughter, in a tidal wave that swept upon the island.

Pictorial dailies reveled in reproductions of her photographs. Even the sedate *Morning Post* carried a half tone of Miss Fleming in the gown she had worn at the wedding of the Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.

The captain of the boat upon which she had left Alol was interviewed by the *Times* representative when he touched at Sydney, Australia. He said:

"Miss Fleming requested to be put down at Maskat. We got into cable communications with our offices from Bombay and made the stop. At dinner on the night before reaching Maskat I asked Miss Fleming if she had any definite plans. She admitted that she had, but she did not tell what they were. Having carried her father around

the world various times, I fancied I knew the Fleming nature, and asked no questions. It is my opinion that she has gone up the Persian Gulf and overland toward the Sea of Aral. Twice during the voyage from Alol she had spoken most interestingly at dinner of a tribe of primitive, nomad folk who might be found in that region, and who were probably straight, unspoiled descendants of the original gypsies. There is no doubt in my mind that Miss Fleming will return to England when she has finished the journey that now interests her."

The *Mail* carried an interview with her banker, in which it was elaborately reported that that gentleman refused to say anything except that he believed Miss Fleming would return, and in which he recalled three times in the history of his institution when old Godnue Fleming, having been reported lost, walked blandly into the bank and demanded to have a check cashed.

The effect of the papers at the club in Alol was chiefly to get people down at an earlier hour than usual in the morning, and a tendency toward stealing club papers, which seemed to be developed simultaneously by the entire membership.

Matilde Riner smiled curiously through the hubbub. Then, instead of scrambling for papers at the club, she put on her newest frock out from Paris, and called at Tavenner House. Continental thrift forbidding her an automobile, she rode in a litter carried on the shoulders of four huge bearers, and slipped down, like a princess in an Arabian Night, at the great door of koa wood which gave entrance to the spreading, shaded house.

Natalie made no pretense of being delighted to see her. Heartbreak was impossible to her, but injury could and did leave an ugly wound of hatred. Hatred with her was no hot and self-destroying flame. Rather it chilled any

warmth out of her faculties, leaving them crystal clear. Tavenner had left her for Madelaine Fleming. Her instinct told her that. However, gossip seemed to see no connection between the disappearance of the famous woman, and the departure of Tavenner from the island. Had it seen such connection, she would have been forced to find him and get him back to save her pride. And she did not want him back—yet. Only when it was too late, when her hatred had worked out its plan—when he should find neither stick nor seedling of his own planting upon the island that he loved—did she want him to return. Her mind was filled with plans for hastening that time. She had no pleasure in visitors. Gowned in long and sweeping draperies of filmiest black, she barely rose from the desk at which she sat to greet her guest.

Matilde came sweetly and insinuatingly to the point.

"You should see the club. It is one uproar," she said. "I thought perhaps you would care to come and hear many guesses as to what has become of Miss Fleming. And since your husband is absent—"

Natalie's eyes became cold, blue jewels.

"And since your husband is absent," Matilde repeated, "there are no tire-some domestic duties, such as dinner, to keep you home."

"I am very busy. Mr. Tavenner left affairs entirely in my hands when he went to London on business connected with sugar—"

"Sugar. Yes," Matilde interrupted innocently.

Alarm touched Natalie. Rightly she had calculated that, since for so long the Tavenners had done no wrong in Mayou, the possibility of a change in their conduct would be a long time taking root in the community—unless the idea of such a possibility were inspired. A wife, abandoned for another woman,

was a pitiable object, and Natalie had no idea of being pitiable in the eyes of any one, even of people she despised. Now this terrible toy of a woman sat before her, in her own house, hinting that she suspected the truth. Natalie would have to work swiftly. How long would it take to bring the plantation up to its maximum of production, wring it dry, and leave it? In England, with a house that was built by a crusader for a background, and a family restored to importance by her wealth, no one would dare to pity her. If Tavenner ever came back, she would punish him. There were ways to punish men that loved.

"And this business of sugar—it will keep Mr. Tavenner long?" inquired Matilde, raising her slender, insidious brows.

Suddenly Natalie smiled, and rang for tea.

"You are right," she said. "I must go out more. I must see people."

The first social condescension of the campaign she outlined occurred next day when she called upon Matilde.

Diniz and his sister, who had years before converted an old monastery into a dwelling place, had always entertained charmingly, if not sumptuously. Even the governor's lady, even the wife of the British consul, august in a skirt that swept the ground and a bang that threatened to sweep the sky, could be found at tea in the cloister on an average of once in two weeks, commenting upon the excellence of the China tea and the originality of people who could make anything so un-Anglican as a monastery into a pleasant place to come.

On the day following that one when news of Madelaine Fleming's disappearance reached the club, Natalie appeared at the gateway of the monastery.

"May I come up?" she called pleasantly as she stood between the two rows of parasol plants that bordered the walk.

Had the ghost of Banquo appeared

at the feast at Glamys, swinging a sunshade lightly by the handle, and gowned in chiffons that belied their mournful intent by the slender grace with which they drifted on the breeze, more astonishment could scarcely have been painted on the faces of the assembled guests.

But whatever the guests lacked in poise was immediately supplied by the hostess. Rising from the heavy old chair in which a father superior had once dominated his realm, Matilde extended a welcoming hand.

"Do," she said. "Will you sit here, or is it that you prefer a place by Toli in the courtyard? Toli is always the pig about the cool spots."

"I should love to talk to Toli about his selfishness," laughed Natalie, and swept her somber but dawnlike person across the cloister to the interior garden, where Toli had already risen from the swinging couch of split bamboo upon which he had reclined. "But may I have some tea to pay for my trouble?" she flung back over her shoulder.

Toli did not get the tea. He was not the man to accept any such peripatetic office as that of Ganymede. He beckoned to a native boy who lounged in the shade of a doorway across the court, gave orders, and then stood looking down as Natalie sank among the cushions of the seat he had vacated.

"Your coming," he said, "is a pleasure for which we have waited—long."

The expression upon his face was nothing awed. Rather it was ravenous, devouring, and distinctly that of a man who is accustomed to having the women he fancies come to him—eventually. On the other hand it was not smug. Older than Natalie by a bare two years, there was something of age and tragedy about Toli Diniz. It was as though a sculptor, working in dark and rather sallow marble, had caught a thing as old as time and modeled it into his features. Cruelty straightened his mouth, and its concomitant of desire narrowed and

weighted his eyes. Welding together cruelty and desire, making of these two things one, were charm and strength and merriment and melancholy and weakness. Philip of Spain had such a face as Toli Diniz, and Lorenzo of Florence, and the pirate captain who chanted litanies and crossed himself as he prodded his victims along the plank.

"I wanted to see you, Toli," Natalie took cream in her tea after the most respectable formula of her native country, and now as she stirred it in she spoke with lowered lids. She looked abashed, a trifle flurried, altogether innocent and lovely. In reality she distinctly disliked such expressions as Toli now wore, and preferred not to see them. "Philip," she continued, still stirring her tea, "has been, as you know, in England, and may have to continue there indefinitely. The sugar market is in a bothersome state. You who live by other—commodities, perhaps do not realize just the condition of affairs that confronts planters. Of course it is not as though I was not used to managing the plantation. I have done that ever since I came to Mayou. I am a better hand at business and have more taste for it than Philip. But new problems are arising. I have taken over the Francke place adjoining mine, and I find it completely disorganized."

Toli was feeding himself upon the light as it came through the leaves of a tall hibiscus plant and found the pale curls that lay against Natalie's cheek under her hat. It was that pale quality that always awoke the fire within him. Out of the furnace of his Latin nature a flame sprang toward her coolness. Out of the multiplicity of his own passions shot a desire, a necessity, to master her passionlessness.

True to his type, Toli could follow two trains of thought with equal clarity.

"Labor?" he asked quietly.

"Yes. I must have—a great deal of labor."

He brought a Chinese chair of plaited rushes, and sat down in it, leaning toward her.

"Have you tried the agencies?" he asked, while his thoughts wove themselves into a cocoon around her.

She looked up from her tea now, and laughed. In the cloister, the wife of the governor smiled. She was very tolerant toward people in such a climate as Mayou. If they coquetted a little, if they discussed delicately and dangerously around the edge of such subjects as the last native dance on the beach, should they be condemned? Assuredly not. It was the soft breeze of the island playing upon them. At home they would doubtless be models of decorum.

"I do not generally waste my time and my efforts," Natalie said to Toli. "There is no labor to be had in Mayou. You know this, of course, and so are very silly to even mention the agencies."

"My sister got an excellent cook only yesterday." He was thinking of the quality of her skin. A kiss would mar it. A thousand kisses—

"Cooks—house boys—yes!" Natalie exclaimed. "But I have my household retinue. I am speaking of men and women for the fields. I have to have a great many laborers immediately. I am looking for quick and ample results. I must have at least three hundred Japanese for the harvest."

"There are not three hundred Japanese laborers, men or women, to be had in Mayou."

"I know that perfectly. They will have to be brought from Japan."

"I suppose you know there is a law against bringing in labor under contract?" It was that very frigidity of coloring in her that woke the agony within him. He wanted to see it reddened, suffused—

"Certainly I know about the law," said Natalie, dropping her eyes to the tea again.

Toli got up from the chair of plaited

rushes, walked to the center of the courtyard, and pulled a white lotus flower from the pool into which the fountain flowed. It was the spontaneous and easily understood action of a man rendered uneasy by a disturbing woman, but during it he had viewed the whole courtyard. Even the lounging native boy at the doorway had withdrawn. He came back and laid the lotus flower like a tribute before Natalie.

"I am not anxious to lose the respect of the people of Mayou—especially the officials," he said. "Three hundred laborers are rather apt to attract attention passing through Alol. And I am not of the temperament to flourish in a jail."

Natalie touched the lotus flower.

"There is an excellent beach at the South Wind side of the Francke place," she said. "A small boat, a trading schooner, timing its arrival at that point for—shall we say a night sufficiently bright for some one who was on the lookout on the beach to see, could discharge a part of its cargo by means of small boats, and come on into Alol with so short a delay that no suspicion would have been aroused. It would not require a large boat to carry three hundred Japanese. They stow themselves in remarkably small quarters. And if any suspicion seemed likely to be aroused, why, there are many small boats that come and go without the formality of papers."

Toli's eyes were hot upon her, compelling her own. She raised her lids deliberately and gave him her own gaze, cool and limpid. He laughed, and shot up from his chair. When he returned from the lotus pond again he laid a flaming, purple blossom beside the white one on the swinging seat.

"The color," he said, standing over her, "the color of passion."

If the flushed softness of her face hardened into marble, he paid no heed. He pulled the chair of plaited rush under him again and sat down.

"Men of my blood are not like your English," he said, once more leaning toward her as his words came in a husky whisper. "We do nothing—for nothing. Only in England could the ridiculous stories of the Arthurian legend have arisen. Farther south knights have only answered appeals from damsels in distress—when the damsels appeal to them."

"And O-Toyo?" Natalie interposed the query to gain a moment of time.

"I would tear down the little house on the West Wind shore about O-Toyo's ears, if you——"

Natalie set her teacup on a Hong-kong table back of the bamboo seat, and laid the lotus blossoms beside it. Then she got up and crossed the cloister to Matilde. Toli sat still in his chair, his face pallid and still, his eyes smoldering with a thousand thoughts. Before she left Natalie came back and leaned across his shoulder and spoke close to his ear.

"I hope—I trust—this damsel appeals to you," she said.

Two nights later Toli ran out in a motor boat and caught a trading schooner that had cleared from Alol several hours before. The master of the ship did not seem amazed. He had taken him aboard before out of the middle of the sea. He knew Toli Diniz.

Toli had made good his implied word to Natalie. But it had not been necessary to go so far as tearing down the little house on the West Wind shore. O-Toyo accepted his desertion of her without words, without tears. If the painted prettiness of her face became a mask of terror, no one knew, nor cared. O-Toyo faced a future for which centuries of ancestral sorrow and resignation had fitted her. It was a future which presented no alternatives. The ancient and honorable profession to which she had been born had been forsaken when Toli chose her from

among the girls who sang to him one night in Japan, and brought her on the long rolling voyage to this tiny place by the sea. She could not return to that profession. Years had blown over her on the West Wind shore, and something more than years, something which spelled the difference between success and failure in the trade to which she had been trained, had become a part of her. There was but one thing left to her: labor. She had never labored. She feared the sharp blades of the sugar grass as she would have feared scythes sheafed in the air above her and about her. Her garments had ever been as delicate as the skin beneath them. Many times, there in the daintiness and ease of her West Wind shelter, she had wailed softly to herself as she saw women of her own people going to their work in the steaming fields, protected against the knives of the cane by thick, padded garments under which their flesh reddened and dripped. Even their faces had been deprived of the touch of any freshening breeze by the bandaging that was necessary if their features were not to be slashed and torn.

Yet now she accepted the thing that had come to her. With certain of the silk garments that had pleased Toli Diniz, she made her way to a clothing stall in the Oriental market of Alol, and bartered for the coarse, padded garments of a cane worker.

CHAPTER IV.

Immersed in plans and in the larger affairs of her larger plantation, Natalie chafed at the necessity of exercising her social faculties in Alol. As soon as a proper period of mourning for her little daughter was passed she lumped her obligations and paid them off by opening Tavenner House to the people she knew—and feared. There was dance music by an orchestra in the ballroom, and food by her chef in the dining

room. The park that sloped away down to the cane fields was strung with lights and dotted with pavilions. An Indian magician flung up rope ladders and climbed their unsupported height to blow down iridescent bubbles upon his ever-changing audience. Natives were hired to stand around the huts of the Oriental laborers in the fields and sing, giving the effect of a distant, happy tenantry.

Natalie had thought that the brilliance of the occasion would be sufficient guarantee to Mayou that her marital affairs were in happy order.

But, light as a gold-and-brown thistle in her dryadlike tulle, Matilde Rinet drifted toward her while the carriages and cars and litters of departing guests filed under the vine-roofed porte-cochère of Tavenner House.

"Every attraction that the heart of any of us could wish," she cooed, "you have been enabled to procure for your most successful party—except one. I speak of Philip. We all speak of Philip."

Though the speech had been no more than the polite reference to an absent host which might be expected from any guest, it chilled Natalie. Recognition of the fact that one flash of color and music had never created a sustained illusion of well-being came upon her. She would have to go on and on, amusing the people she despised, affecting an interest in the uniforms at the club, in the dress boxes that arrived by every boat from Paris. She would have to laugh, and dance, and fritter away time and energy that she begrudged. How she would make Philip Tavenner pay for this one day, how she would make him pay!

And now she began to think of Toli. If only he would come soon. More production, more wealth—and then England! England would be the place to pay off Philip Tavenner. Toli should be coming soon.

Standing at one of the long French

windows of her house that looked over a clear sweep of lawn reaching down to the very border of her fields, she watched the sudden night of the tropics come down and finish the day that had followed the lawn fête. Quiet, the dignity of her own companionship, the thrill of her own self-sufficiency! Since she must remain upon the hated island of Mayou a little longer, why—why could she not be allowed these recompenses, these palliations of her sentence?

A moon came up out of the sea and rolled itself toward her, a great inflated moon. As definitely as she disliked exaggeration in the conduct of people, she disliked it in the conduct of the moon. Her house boy slipped in behind her through a carven door of koa wood and asked her if she would have lights. She nodded.

He turned on a dozen tiny points of illumination, and withdrew. There was an organ in an alcove, a great towering organ with pipes that reached to the lofty ceiling, and a bench with lyre legs before it.

The rapture of her loneliness, of her splendor, was like a sensual pain in Natalie. She was conscious of the light upon the somber metal of her gown, upon the black pearls about her throat, upon the pale gold of her hair. She went to the organ and seated herself before it, watching the ivory of her hands as they wandered along the keys, playing a kind of psalm to herself.

So profound was the ecstasy in which she swam that she did not hear the window behind her being pushed open, nor Toli Diniz come in. She was only conscious that something from outside clicked upon, and shattered, the rare perfection of the atmosphere she had created around her. She turned her head. Toli came forward and dropped upon one knee beside the bench. He reached hungrily, possessively, for her hand. She drew it back and rose.

"They have landed at the South Wind

shore," he said, rising himself to maintain the balance between them, and regaining an outward show of composure and confidence. "I have brought three hundred. Your overseer at the Francke place had quarters ready for them."

"Men or women?"

"Both."

"That is very good. They work better when there are both men and women."

"Natalie——"

"Did Collins give you a check, or shall I?"

"Collins did not give me a check. I expect my pay from you."

"I will give you your money now."

She started for the *escritoire* at the end of the room, but Toli caught her and flung her back until she faced him.

"Natalie," he said between his teeth, "what sort of pleasantry is this? I have been away on a long journey for you. It seemed that I should never come back again. It seemed months and years upon that boat, loaded down with coolies and——"

She disengaged herself from him.

"I was about to have dinner," she said.

"I will dine with you. You will excuse the fact that I am not dressed when you remember that I have been upon a dangerous errand that allowed me no time to think of the adornments of life."

"I do not care to mingle business with——"

"Business!" His eyes blazed. "If you are speaking of business—yes! There was a tacit understanding between us——"

"The understanding that you would be paid. I have no thought of robbing you of what is rightly yours. I can write you a check now, or, if you prefer cash——"

"Natalie——" He felt the strength even of rage leave him, felt his knees tremble, the blood that had raced hotly

through his veins sing as weakly as water against his ears. He reached once more for her hand. Where was the strength and cruelty of the men of his race? Where was the primitive animality that naturally and successfully resorted to the lash? Was he the descendant of a pirate that he should stand shaking and ashamed before this frail, bright thing of gold and ivory, feeling himself beaten and cringing and cheated, unable even to lift his hand or his voice, while she seated herself at a writing table and drew a large flat book toward her?

Sobs came up in his throat.

"Natalie," he cried, "you are terrible! Natalie, you don't mean that you——"

She tore a paper from the book and held it toward him. Hating her, hating himself, unable to do other than she bid, he reached toward her and took it in his hand.

"I mean," she said calmly, "that as soon as possible I am going back to England. And when I do I am still going to be a woman entitled—rightfully entitled—to take her place among the women of her class."

Then before he could cry out the explorations that choked his throat and breast she was gone. The great carved door of koa wood had opened and closed. He heard a bolt shot on the other side.

He passed out through the French window again, onto the lawn.

Courage, his sense of dominance, belief in his power to scheme and maneuver and bring things to pass—he had to regain these again. Where? When doubt had crept in before the cottage on the West Wind shore had sustained them. It would revive them now.

He took the road along the cliff, past the club, through the water front of the town. One of the three nighthawk cabs of Alol hailed him. He declined its offices. He was sick with a sickness that had never assailed him before,

and not even the bleared eyes of a cab driver should see him stricken with that malady. O-Toyo, the memory of her painted prettiness, of the touch of her ministering hands, was like a medicine that he must reach. He ran, sobs shaking his mouth, his feet feeling the familiar path when tears blotted out the vision of his eyes. His love was back there in the feudal house among the vastness of cane fields. Surcease from that love was in the little house that the west wind blew upon.

The moon cast a long shadow of that house, and he came under it, stifling back a cry of gratitude. There was no light in the house. O-Toyo was asleep with her dark, formally dressed head held by the wooden support to which she persistently returned when he was absent. He smiled a twisted smile. He would break O-Toyo of that wooden support, once and for all.

He pushed back the sliding door that opened on the porch; silence came out and struck upon him. Strange silence. He knew where a candle stood. Striking a light, he saw the room. O-Toyo was a poor housekeeper when he was gone. He would rectify that, too. There was clutter about—clutter. Even a giant spider spinning downward from a beam. He crossed the room toward another door. It was fastened shut from the other side. He called. There was no answer. He put his shoulder against the door. A hook on the other side ripped loose. The door rolled back.

Then he fell back, and a rasping, hideous sound like a croak broke upward from his throat. O-Toyo was there. But it was not O-Toyo. Even she had been cheated away from him. The thing upon the floor with its head upon the wooden head rest lay in the lines that he knew as O-Toyo. But it was a thing of lacerated flesh. There was a knife beside it. One wound—one close below the heart—had been made by the knife. The others were light

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and crossed and jagged, as though made by blades that swung.

"O-Toyo," he called to her in the tongue of her own country. "O-Toyo—awake."

There was a cut across the cheek, like a smile of derision.

"O-Toyo—what——"

The dress of a cane worker was upon the floor in a corner, a huddled, horrible dress. The odor of labor rose from it. Other garments also lay about. They were silken things, raddled as with knives.

Standing back in the flickering candlelight, he knew. O-Toyo had gone into the fields. Abandoned by him, she had gone into the fields. Unable to bear the weight and heat of the padded armor of the cane worker, she had given her unprotected delicacy to the swinging cruelty of the sugar grass. And when the cutting and slashing reached the point of a torture she could not bear she had made an end of misery, an end rendered honorable by the custom of her folk.

Rage welled up in him like a fountain of strength. O-Toyo—the medicine that was to have healed him—had been poured out upon the fields, perhaps upon the very fields of the woman who had given him his hurt. The woman who had given him his hurt, and had destroyed the medicine that would have eased him, that woman lived and prospered by the cutting of cane grasses upon the bodies of other women! Very well, then, she should feel the blades of the knives by which she lived. She should be beaten, slashed, dragged, until she screamed for mercy and kissed the hand that struck her. That was the treatment which such women as she repaid in the coin of their respect and worship and fear.

Like a palm brought for her own burial, O-Toyo had stood a sheaf of cane beside the huddled garments in the corner of the room. As though it

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were a whip of many sharpened thongs, Toli took it and trailed it beside him. Out of the house on the West Wind shore he ran, along the road that passed the water front and then the club, up to the coral pavement of the road that crowned the jagged headland of the cliff, across the fields.

He saw the house. High and cool it stood in the wind that blew above the welter of the cane. He saw her light. Long and slender and golden it gleamed through the open window that looked toward the fields. She was sitting there, back of that window, isolated, secure, sufficient. Thinking of England, she was thinking of her own perfections, thinking of the women with whom she would be rightfully one. But she should not be one with them. She had counted without him, without Toli Diniz. Women were what men made them to be, and he had certain ideas of the thing he would make of Natalie Tavenner.

Emerging from the forest of the fields, he ran upward across the lawn.

Music came out through the window and wrapped itself about him. He did not hear. His every faculty was strained toward the light in which she sat. And then he saw her. Her back was toward him, a long, cool triangle of alabaster between the folds of her gown. There was fearlessness in that back, and passionlessness. Fearlessness and passionlessness that rendered weak and wretched the terror and rage which had swept him on. She sat before her organ and played, while he writhed and struck out in the very flames of hell. The music that she played was the music of a sphere against which he might batter himself to death, but which would preserve its flawlessness even with his blood upon it.

The sheaf of cane fell from his hand. He would like to draw lines of blood upon her cool, straight back, but he could not. Next morning a gardener

would throw the sheaf of cane upon some pile of rubbish to be burned. It was fitting that it should be so. He, Toli Diniz, was beaten. The thousand passions that composed him had licked out and been thrown back upon themselves by one woman of ice.

He turned from her and ran. Even through the fields the music of the organ followed him, cool, untroubled music. The music of a sphere which, spinning goldenly upon itself, had touched him and cast him, broken, out of its jeweled orbit.

He did not follow the road that crowned the cliff. He let himself down by vines and coral crusts and came to the sea. He sat down upon a tangle of wreckage at the water's edge under the cliff, looking outward. One day she would sail out, as he was now looking out. Having enriched herself through him, she would cross the water, and create a new cool magnificence around herself in another land. He had helped her. He had responded to her trickery, had juggled with the law and with chance for her. Three hundred men and women had been brought by him against the mandates of the land, against the codes of decency itself, to till her fields. And when he had asked her for pay for this service—she had given him a check.

He took the rectangle of folded paper from his pocket, and read it under the light of the full, close moon. It was a big check. Matilde would love to see such figures upon a check. Pretty, clever little Matilde—

He found the bank book which he had carried with him to Japan, and opened it. There was a substantial balance. He had not done badly—financially. The check and the balance at the bank would keep Matilde all through her pretty, thrifty life. He did not want either the check or the balance at the bank. He had striven for money, schemed for it, flouted the law for it

because it had seemed the proper symbol of the power he felt within him. Now that he knew he had no power, he had no need for the symbol.

He washed his face in the water that slipped up the beach under the cliff, straightened his disheveled clothes, and went on to the club. The last bridge players had left their tables. Even the wide veranda was deserted. A China boy brought him paper and envelopes. He wrote two letters; one to Matilde, the other to the bank in Alol. In the latter he enclosed the bank book, and the check endorsed to his sister's account. The China boy took them, repeated the directions he had been given for mailing them, and went down the palm avenue that led to the beach road and the main street of Alol.

Toli watched him go. When there was no one at the club, not even the China boy, to wonder at his unsteady steps, he, too, went down the palm avenue and along the beach road to the water front. Out in the stream a tiny boat was dropping anchor. Finding a small boat drawn up on the sand, Toli shoved it off and headed toward the lights of the little boat.

The captain was not surprised to see him.

"Where now?" he asked.

"Anywhere. If you go now, there will be no need of papers. The whole town has been asleep for hours."

The captain regarded his strange guest for a moment. He had practical tendencies himself. He felt a brothership with Toli Diniz. And, after all, since he had already discharged the profitable part of his cargo at the South Wind side of Mayou, he might as well—

"All right," he said, and went about giving the necessary orders. He was not amazed that his plans had been changed so suddenly. He knew Toli Diniz. He had taken him up under stranger circumstances than these. He

had even taken him up at night out of the middle of the sea.

CHAPTER V.

The postman, magnificent in a braided cap and an indeterminate garment of printed cotton, usually arrived at the monastery about eight o'clock, and the letters he brought were on the tray which came up to Matilde at ten. Even at that hour she was sometimes too indolent to read them, but lay looking up at the canopy of her great bed, luxuriating in the colorful beauty upon which her cloudy eyes had opened. The room which she had taken for herself was the old upper assembly room of the building, and the bed was one which had been ripped from a Spanish ship, which had lain for time out of mind deep in the sands of the beach. It resembled a bunk, and yet was as gorgeous as a couch from which an empress might have presided over a levee. It lifted massively carved posts to the ceiling of the brown old room and held aloft—too high to hinder the passage of air across it—velvets which might have been left as part of the treasure of their present owner's pirate ancestor. Matilde tempered her native thrift with an almost uncanny genius for unearthing the beautiful and rare, and putting it to her own use. And nothing delighted her more than the products of her genius.

But on the morning following that upon which the trading schooner had taken leave of Alol, without so much as dropping anchor, she awoke suddenly and entirely just as the postman's summons clattered from the iron knocker on the gate. She leaped from the bed without so much as a congratulatory smile at its splendors, and called from the window of her room at the house boy making leisurely way between the borders of parasol plants.

"Hurry, Orana! Quick—*vite!* And my breakfast—nimbley!"

She went back to the bed and, sitting erect in its center, waited. A slim, brown maid came softly up the stairs, but before she could push back the curtain of netted grass which served for a door Matilde was scolding at her.

"With more quickness when I command! Now my letters. Put the tray there beside me, and give to me my letters."

She did not touch the tray so daintily served. The coffee grew cold, and the hot, baked roll lay untouched. Matilde sat straight in her great bed, holding a letter, trying to read between the lines.

It was from Toli. It had been posted in Alol the night before. It was a greeting and farewell. There should have been nothing ominous about a farewell from Toli, particularly this farewell. He had decided to make another voyage immediately. It would be less embarrassing for the captain of the schooner, if he did not come, officially, into port. Whenever bother about papers could be avoided it should be avoided. Toli regretted not seeing his sister. He loved her as dearly as ever. There was a check. It was signed by Madame Tavenner, and he did not think there would be any trouble. If, however, there should be any trouble, Captain Hansen of the *Hopewell* might be useful to force payment.

The numerals designating the size of the check frightened Matilde until she shivered in the warmth and luxury of her room. The check represented enough to— Toli could have lived upon it for— Natalie had given it to him! That was the point upon which her mind struck and hung. Natalie had given Toli a check of uncommon size. The woman of marble had paid for services—undoubtedly services he had rendered in expectation of other pay—with a check!

She dressed as quickly as she could and went down to the club. A China boy was straightening chairs and re-fitting papers and magazines to their

holders. Matilde's nationality and ancestry gave her a cosmopolitanism which assured her of friendly response in any stratum of society that could be of use to her.

"Yen," she said, steadying her hand as she lighted a cigarette, "you see 'em, Mista Toli, last night, yes?"

Yen grinned and set an ash tray for her with exceptional care.

"Yis."

"You see 'em catch boat, Yen? You watch 'em top side street when he row out catch 'em boat, yes?"

Yen grinned again at the paramount joke of being caught in curiosity.

"Yis."

"How look, Yen? How Mista Toli look?"

"Much bad. Wash 'em face salt water—by beach. Salt water very much bad nice gentleman's face. Eyes much red."

Matilde tamped out her cigarette and went to a window looking upon the sea. She knew. As clearly as though she held the beloved head against her breast and heard the outpourings of bitterness and passion and terrible defeat from her brother's lips, she knew. What tears she shed flowed inward. Yen went about his labors. Standing at the window, Matilde smoked three cigarettes, one lighted from the other, in the long tortoise holder, and the gold flecks in her eyes grew bright and hard. Natalie had destroyed Toli. Very well; she, Matilde, should destroy Natalie. Natalie had driven Toli before the lash of her coldness and security and wealth. Very well, Natalie should be driven by a lash that flicked down upon the twin nerves of her fear and vanity until she ran from fear to folly and from folly to ruin.

As soon as the ten-o'clock opening hour of the bank arrived Matilde had Yen telephone for one of the three decrepit hacks which graced the city, and drove into Alol. Never for a second

had the method of a less clever woman presented itself to Matilde, the method of tearing up the check and being done forever with the insult it represented. Natalie should pay. She should pay in money, in uneasiness, in buffoonery. That was it. She would drive the cold and perfect Natalie until nothing but a burlesque of that coldness and that perfection were left. She would flick her lash down upon the quivering nerves of fear and vanity until the whole body and soul of the woman jerked into a ridiculous and hideous and perpetual dance.

Matilde began her campaign that afternoon. In the cool drowsiness of her room she lay upon her bed and stared upward at the canopy with thoughtful, merciless eyes. Then, witch-like in creamy laces, she reached for the telephone, which stood anachronistically beside her, and called for the number of Tavenner House.

"Have you heard," she asked sweetly, "that an American gunboat arrived today, and that there are many handsome young Ulysseses, wondering if they shall be sung to upon this island? To assure them, I have said that I would have all of the prettiest local sirens to tea at the club at five o'clock. You shall come, and enchant at least two of the hardiest."

At the other end of the wire Natalie stood in riding clothes, ready for an inspection of the reinforced working crew upon the Francke place as soon as the heat of the sun should a little subside.

"Sorry," she said, "I am busy."

Matilde laughed.

"But you surely feel—as I do now—that it is part of the business of both yourself and me, to talk to men who go down to the sea in ships. They are the real news carriers of the world—the sailors. It is they who meet and speak with the lost ones of earth, like men who meet and speak with ghosts. One of

them may have seen your husband. You would not like that news of your husband should reach others before it reaches you."

Natalie came to the club. Her hand flinched a little as she forced it out toward the little hostess of the day, and the straight focus of her eyes swerved for a moment. But her gaze came back in a long challenge to the brown eyes that regarded her knowingly.

After all, the gunboat was harmless enough, and she might have spared her trouble. It had come from Bremerton on Puget Sound and was calling at the various Pacific islands in which the United States was interested. The commander had a wife and child at home, and wanted to talk to Natalie about them. She could have choked his sentimental and platitudinous breath out of his throat. At least she could have gone and left him talking. But she stayed and heard him ramble mawkishly on, the while she strained her ears to hear what others were saying. Her nerves began to jump. She laughed to cover the contortions they drew around her mouth. She wanted to go, and yet she stayed. She stayed until the officers had returned to their ship, until the last gossip had left the veranda of the club. She waved to Matilde climbing the cliff in a rickety hack. She hated Matilde, and yet she waved good-by to her to show she had no fear. The smile that she had worn the whole afternoon through ached upon her face.

She must call soon at Government House. It had never before seemed necessary to call there often. Natalie recognized scant kinship between herself and the aristocracy of political preferment. But now the ancient, social truth, that calls are a medium for distributing whatever it is one wishes to distribute, dawned upon her. And the club. She must utilize that most potent of local machines to produce an air of well-being about herself. The prospect of

frequent descents from the plantation to the club, of hour after hour spent listening while pompous, elderly men in white uniforms with gold buttons held forth indiscriminately on their last game of bridge, their last affair of the heart, and their last battle, angered her until her face flushed red. She loathed gregariousness, and she was being forced into it.

She would have to change, if her loathing of sociability did not drive her into the committing of several choice, cold-blooded murders. She was changing. Also she was being driven into hysteria, if not into murder. She wanted to laugh and dance, not from inward gayety, but to the tune of her nerves. Speed suggested itself to her as an outlet for the high-tension, hideous force which had taken her into its possession. She called her automobile, sent her chauffeur climbing home by the footpath, and drove her car herself. She had been right about speed. It was not only an outlet; it was an intoxicant. After negotiating the sharp turn on the promontory she wanted to go back and do the whole thing over again, faster. She wanted to laugh. Laughter would be an outlet, an intoxicant, too. With both speed and laughter as compensations, she ought to be able to endure calls and the club, and to sustain a very convincing air of happiness, of martial prosperity, before Mayou.

When she got home Matilde Rinet went to her room and studied the face reflected in the mirror over her dressing table. It was a satisfied little face. A start had been made. But Matilde was not so foolish as to believe that a start would send Natalie along the way she had planned for her to travel. There must be something more than a start. There must be something more definite than suspicion with which to prod the victim to her own destruction. Matilde must know where Tavenner was. That knowledge in her possession was the

string upon which Natalie could be made to grimace and to dance to any tune that Matilde piped. But knowledge—how did one get knowledge?

Papers and governments had been unable to find Madelaine Fleming. But there were other agencies besides papers and governments. There were ships. Prowling little ships that touched life at a thousand points unknown to papers and governments. Ships were the things. Matilde must make friends with ships. She must know the captains of all the little boats touching at Alol. Some day one of them would bring her news of Tavenner. Some day one of them, carrying her message of love away, would bring back an answer from Toli. But how could she, who had lived fastidiously all her days, explain to Alol her friendship with the strange Flying Dutchman of the Southern seas? How but by trade? Toli had traded. She would take up the business he had dropped. She might even increase that which he had left to her stewardship.

Every line of her desire seemed to converge toward the little ships coming into the harbor of Alol.

Time flows like a story without punctuation on the island of Mayou, and one day Matilde made an early visit to the club again for an exchange of pidgin English with Yen.

"You see 'em boat out there?" She pointed to a weather-beaten craft coming to anchor in the roadstead. "You see 'em that boat before, yes?"

Ceremoniously Yen gave over his dusting activities, went to the veranda, and studied with unshaded, unblinking eyes the boat afloat in the blaze of sea and sun beyond.

"Yis," he reported when his observations were completed.

"Same boat Mista Toli catch long time, yes?"

"Yis," said Yen, taking another look.

That afternoon Matilde violated the whole code of social usagé on the island

of Mayou. She sent a boatman out to a weather-beaten trading schooner with an invitation for the master to come to tea.

He came, as much for his own reassurance as for hers. He had been partial to Toli Diniz, and, besides fondness for him, there might be other reasons to regret the necessity for Toli's flight.

"He left ship, ma'am," he said sadly. "That's all I know."

Matilde caught his eye as it skidded distastefully off the teapot that the house boy was bringing toward her on a tray, and pity for the great hulk of a man before her smote her unexpectedly.

"Some wine, Orana," she said. And then, deferring to her guest: "Or would you prefer whisky and soda?"

Captain Hansen breathed a heavy and relieved assent.

"He left ship," he repeated when a long, cool glass was between his fingers, "at Sydney—Sydney, Australia. All the way to Sydney he didn't tell me nothing."

"He had had a shock. It was just before he left."

"Yes. I took as much for granted. But not knowing what it was, I didn't know whether I should come back into Alol myself. You see, there was a little matter——"

"It was not the law which touched my brother."

Captain Hansen celebrated the news by draining his glass. Matilde replenished it from the squat bottle which Orana had left.

"And from your ship," she asked, "he went—where?"

"Well, I——"

"You may tell me. I am stronger than I look."

"Well, you see, ma'am, I was kind of used to doing what Diniz said for me to do. So when he wanted a letter to some of the seamen's agencies, saying he was a good sailor, I give it to him. It's worried me since, though there can't be nothing really to worry about. Diniz

never was the man to ship as able-bodied, shock or no shock—not so long as boats have staterooms and seats at the captain's table. But I've worried."

Any softening that might have crept into the heart of Matilde Rinet was barred out. Toli—her Toli—a toiler of the sea! She asked another question carefully.

"Do you know of a second man who is gone also from Mayou? I speak of Tavenner—Philip Tavenner."

"Tavenner never did much of the kind of trading that I——"

Matilde helped him out.

"But you may have seen him on one of your recent voyages. Perhaps at some port. On your voyages you touch many ports. Is it not so?"

"Most of them, ma'am, one time or another. And what I don't touch, masters of other boats like mine do. There's Williams of the *Michaelmas*——"

"Am I not right, if one wished news of a man who thought to hide himself from the world, a boat like-yours might bring it? You buy cargoes?"

"Copra, ma'am," he hastened to interpose, "and what sugar small growers that ain't in no combine have to sell, and silk from China, and other commodities."

"And you touch at many ports—as one might say, out-of-the-world ports?"

"Most of them, ma'am, one time or another."

"Boats—your boat and others like yours—find those who are lost, do they not, or those who have found those who are lost? Better than governments or newspapers?"

"I couldn't have said it better, ma'am. We get news others don't."

Matilde poured herself a cup of tea, and over the brim of it studied her visitor.

"For two reasons—for three reasons," she said at last deliberately, "I shall take up my brother's business. I wish to make money; I wish to gather news; I

wish to find my brother. You will send masters of other ships besides your own to see me? To talk—business?"

Wariness was an integral part of the captain of the *Hopewell*.

"What do you wish to deal in?" he asked.

"Besides news—copra, and such sugar as small planters, who have no combination, wish to sell."

"Restrict your trade to the *Hopewell*, ma'am?" He was anxious. Partial as he had been to Toli, that gentleman's exclusiveness had been an embarrassment.

"I will make contact with as many ships as possible. Small ships."

Better than he knows his own tonnage, the master of a trading vessel knows his capacity for intangible cargoes. Also, after making certain soundings, he is apt to know in what waters he is sailing with those who want those cargoes. Hansen studied Matilde. She was little, but there was something big back of that littleness.

"Copra and sugar'll make you money, ma'am," he said, setting down his glass while every reed of the Hong Kong chair beneath him creaked at his effort to rise. "As for the news you want and Diniz—I'll do my best. Us pirates must stick together."

Matilde gave him her hand.

CHAPTER VI.

And now a queer company began to find its way to the monastery. The sound of seafaring voices echoed through the cloister, and the thump of seafaring fists as they set down glasses upon the worn planks of the ancient table in the refectory. The wife of the consul raised her bang a bit higher, and came no longer to tea. Natalie came. She came not only to tea, but when little fly-by-night craft dotted the harbor of Alol with lights of red and green and white she came to other and later feasts.

There was rumor of a night when her laughter had been heard in the monastery garden even after the lights at the club had been extinguished. And it was said, that as the dawn shot up and struck against the East Wind shore of Mayou the roar of the big red car from Tavenner House could be heard ascending the road to the cliff.

Confused, knowing nothing except that there was occasion to be kind to some one, the wife of the governor came to see Matilde. She was of the large, sweet, maternal type, and when she was called upon to say things that might hurt she blushed pinkly and painfully to the roots of her graying hair.

"I—I am—in a way—the mother-general of Mayou," she began. Fortunately she had brought some knitting. There was a grandchild at home, who was most obliging about growing out of his sweaters. "I mean to say," she started all over again when she was nicely fortified behind her flashing needles, "that it is my duty, in a way, to meddle. So forgive an old woman, dear, for what she is going to say now. You see, Mayou is a small island. There is very little to talk about, and a great many people to talk about it. Consequently much has to be made of little. It has to. And so it is only wise, in such a community, to give nothing for talk to start from. After all, there is a great deal of comfort and profit to be derived from abiding by the customs of any place. And it has never been the custom of Alol to entertain officers, who have not a navy or a big company behind them to vouch for them. Of course, I know that a great many of the men sailing on small boats in and out of port are splendid and interesting gentlemen. But since they are not generally received, and since you are all alone——"

"They were my brother's friends," said Matilde defensively.

Loyalty was the final argument always

with the governor's lady, and the surest appeal to her sympathy. She felt a wave of tenderness go from her toward the tiny brown thing sitting forward in the cloister shadows like some intense and purposeful elf. And, after all, she had shirked, in a way. She had come to Madame Rinet first because coming to the monastery was the easier part of her mission. Now she must brace herself and go to Tavenner House. Folding her knitting, she grew more red and more wretched as she saw herself face to face with that difficult pilgrimage. And then Matilde frightened her into paleness again by reading her thoughts.

"Do not go to Madame Tavenner," she said. "It will do no good to her, and it will only make you unhappy."

"Why—I—I——"

"Never mind how I know things. Perhaps I am a witch."

"I believe you are," said the governor's wife, and her tolerance, which had stretched itself to reach the heathen of many lands, found no difficulty at all in covering a witch. "May I—may I stay to tea with you—and talk?"

"Oh, please!" The plea came so spontaneously, from some unknown depth within herself, that Matilde gasped. What was happening to her, that she should have tears of gratitude in her throat because a gray-haired woman, who knitted innumerable sweaters, had asked to stay to tea?

She rose and brought the tea herself. There was a simplicity in Matilde that might have graced a greater lady. And there was also subtlety. She wanted to be alone with the wife of the governor. Even a house boy would have been an intrusion.

"You see a change in Madame Tavenner?" she asked as she poured the amber liquid into a frail, eggshell cup.

"Yes. Every one sees it. She——"

"By every boat she has new dress boxes from Paris," Matilde broke in. "Those that came to her formerly were

from London. It is typical of the whole change, is it not?"

"Of course one has no right to interfere with such private matters as the clothes she wears."

"Or the automobiles in which she tears along the cliff? Not that, either? And yet it is all a part of the same thing. Perhaps you think I should not ask her here when I have to dinner the men who—were friends of my brother. You will not believe when I say that I no longer ask, that she phones to me when a new boat swings out in the harbor; that she asks me if she may come."

"Perhaps if you—perhaps if you did not ask those men to dinner——"

"I am carrying on the business of my brother. It is a business of complications which only I understand. One part of it goes well. I am becoming enriched—with riches that shall wait the coming of my brother. All that I do is for him. And if the prosecution of my brother's business touches Madame Tavenner, that also is for him. I have loved one thing in my life. I see only one object before me, and I live for that. My brother will one day come back to Mayou. When he comes he must be conqueror in all ways over those who drove him out."

"You are a strange woman. I wonder—I wonder——"

"You wonder why you are kind to me. I wonder also. But more than that I wonder why it is that I am glad—that you are kind."

It was not until she was back in the great, pleasant room that was hers in Government House that a sentence dropped by Matilde rose out of the confusion in which the first lady of Mayou had left the monastery. What did that odd sprite of a woman mean when she said, "those that drove him forth?" Suspicion came, but she dismissed it. It came again. Could it be that the cold, proud woman who was Natalie Tavenner—— She shut off that line of

thought. But she allowed her instinct for authority some sway. The Tavenner car should not be permitted to tear along the cliff whenever, and at whatever speed, it chose. Some laws ought to be arranged. She would speak to the governor.

Speed was the relief to which Natalie resorted as to a drug—speed and laughter. She sent to England for a new car. When it was too long in arriving she got a substitute from San Francisco. The horses which she had kept for her daily rides over her plantations stood in their stalls, kicking for the grooms to give them the exercise for which they suffered. Natalie could not ride them, and also be at the club. And she must be at the club. As she swooped down from the cliff she daily swept the harbor with her eyes, and then turned them to the veranda.

Matilde was there—always there. Her hands, still and small and brown, blazing with barbaric jewels, were the hands of a strangler, to Natalie's eyes. She could almost feel them upon her throat, choking out the breath of dignity and difference by which she had lived before, by the absence of which she was dying now. By adroitness and cleverness and persistence, by the constant jabbing of pins of fear through the single rift in an otherwise perfect armor, the little daughter of a pirate had mastered the daughter of crusaders and knights. Fear! Natalie knew that she danced grotesquely to fear, and yet she could not help but dance. Every ship that came into the harbor was a menace; every man that landed was an enemy whom she must watch. And ships and men were in the employ of Matilde.

How Philip Tavenner would pay for this one day! How she would make him pay!

Then came a revolution of the seasons, and the *Hopewell* came once more into the harbor of Alol and sent a boat ashore.

With the tall, cool glass in his hand, Captain Hansen found comfort again in the Hongkong chair.

"Met up with a queer bird, ma'am," he said. "Officer. Major of British engineers, missing since the war. I picked him up at Chahbar, dressed like a picture out of the 'History of the Bible,' and helped him get some white man's clothes when we come to Bombay. He's shipping along with me as supercargo. Where to, he don't seem to care. If I was describing him, ma'am, I'd say he was queer—moony. Limp—*but I don't mean that*. What I mean is he got hit bad at Gallipoli, and come to 'way inland, with a Turk standing guard over the brig. There was a dark-eyed girl mixed up in it, like there usually is, and at the end she fitted him out and sent him dusting away into the desert. Had to, I guess. Probably some other fellow's girl, and there was a squall ahead. Of course, if you'd give me my choice, ma'am, between bucking a squall and starting on a voyage with no port marked on the papers and only a camel under me, I'd take the squall. But I said he was queer."

"How else is he queer?" Matilde asked quietly.

"Well, if it ain't queer enough at a time like that for a man to take to thinking of the Queen of Sheba, and wondering if he could find the ancient city that she come from, I don't know queer, ma'am, that's all. As for me, I think he got hit in the head as well as the leg."

"He went into the desert—into the old cities of the desert?"

"How he done it, he ain't able to tell very satisfactory, himself. But he's been traveling since 1917, and even with a camel I don't know no place but the desert where that much time can be wasted. He—he spins a yarn about a place he come across. It was a ruined town, with one good house—and a man and a woman living in it."

"Toli?" She leaned toward him breathlessly. "Is it Toli?"

"It don't fit Toli. The woman was light-haired and complected. And the man—the man had got some cane cuttings somewheres from an Arab, he said, that came visiting sometimes. And he was setting out a little plantation from them cuttings!"

"It is not Toli. My heart aches that it is not Toli. But it is——"

Hansen nodded.

"Your man—he will talk to me? He will tell me everything?"

"You'll have to handle him careful." Captain Hansen's voice rumbled as he muffled it. "If you start the pumps on him, he'll shut up like a clam. But just pretend that anything he's got to say is a side issue compared to the way the moon shines that night, and he'll run on no end. I'd keep him away from the Tavenner woman, if I was you. Since that girl let him loose from jail he's kind of gone soft when it comes to the woman question. And she—the Tavenner woman—she looks kind of like somebody whose pictures show up in the papers every now and then. Not that he's seen many papers. He's been under my care for a couple of months, and prior to that—well, no papers as I know of has much circulation in the desert. But anyhow, I'd keep him away from the Tavenner woman."

"How long will you be in port?"

"I am overdue now at Celebes, owing to coming here first."

"To-morrow night—the governor receives to-morrow night. I can get him, your British major of engineers, a card."

"Bingham, his name is; Major Bingham. But as I said, he got hit in the leg. He ain't a dancing man no more."

"Nor shall I dance—to-morrow night. There will be pavilions on the lawn, and seats around the lagoon, and a moon will shine above, and a band will play softly."

"I leave that part of it to you," said

the captain. "I done my share, bringing him here."

CHAPTER VII.

Matilde fought her way through crowded streets next day when she came down from Government House on the hill, and instead of proceeding to the hairdresser's, toward which point all the rest of feminine Alol seemed to be converging, turned onto the wide and winding street that bordered the water front.

She had got the card for Major Bingham. The wife of the governor had looked at her inquiringly as she asked for it, and Matilde was still shaken by the recollection of a desire that had possessed her to answer the mild, inquiring eyes, to make of the motherly woman who questioned her inaudibly a confessor for the soul that even now, with the satisfaction of its inmost desire in immediate prospect, was wretched and weary and almost hysterically sad. But she had kept her silence and asked for the thing she wanted. Now she was taking it to the little pier, where a boat from the *Hopewell* waited. She was carrying it herself. She could not trust it to a messenger.

The streets were intolerable, by reason of the crowds which thronged them. At three o'clock that afternoon the guns mounted on the comic-opera fort in the harbor had boomed a salute. That meant that the princess, the hereditary native ruler of Mayou, had arrived at the border of the city from her somnolent, flower-covered palace inland. Now as Matilde turned onto the street along the water front she had to halt her nervous progress and bite her lips and wait.

A file of natives, flower chains around their necks and upon their heads, came in unorganized procession along the circuitous and all-encompassing route by which the princess once a year upon the

occasion of the official reception at Government House entered the ancient capital of her people and proceeded toward the house kept always in readiness for her.

After the file of flower-strung attendants followed bearers, a score of strong and copper-colored giants. These had been used in relays along the miles of tropical road that separated the home she loved from the home that a new order had given to the descendant of the old rulers of Mayou. On the shoulders of the middle four of these bearers, a litter rode and swayed. It was of rushes, woven so delicately that its curtains hung and shone in the sun like silk. Above it, in the manner of plumes upon a catafalque, sheaves of palm leaves were held aloft as a shelter against the the daytime heat.

From out of the litter one little foot, with a circlet of tiny flowers above it at the ankle, protruded. The princess was asleep. The booming of the guns in the harbor had not wakened her, nor did the voices and press of the crowd in the street. She had found that, to remove herself from the annoyance and clamor of strangers, she had always the sweet Nirvana of sleep at her command. She need not arouse herself until the actual hour had arrived when she must stand beside the governor and his lady and receive the courtesy of the land over which she should have ruled. No new arrangement of her garments was necessary, nor any redecorating of her person. Beside her as she slept in her litter sat the little crooning maid, who replaced the flower garlands as they withered, and perpetually stroked the brown skin of her mistress into satin smoothness.

Matilde watched the quaint relic of sweet and primitive days pass by, and then as soon as the decorum of Alol would permit she went fighting her way through the crowd again toward the boat from the *Hopewell*.

With the note delivered into the hand of the sailor who awaited it, she might have gone on to the club. Like the little princess in the litter, Matilde's toilet almost made itself. Her rich, dark hair curled up crisply from her brow, and the ivory of her skin was such as the best cosmetic would merely blemish. There was no reason, then, why she should not go to the club and amuse herself for an hour or two. But the sadness which had come upon her at Government House still clutched its wan hand around her heart. She had been a fool not to state her errand to some secretary, instead of insisting on seeing the governor's wife. Never in her life before had a woman affected her in just that manner. It was almost as though, with Toli gone, she reached out for something else to love, for some one else to serve.

She hailed a cab, that had deposited its cargo of vanity at the door of the single hairdresser of Alol, and drove to her home.

But the mood of the afternoon had passed when night came and she was at last out under the moon which had been so highly recommended by Captain Hansen.

Bingham was nicer than she had supposed he would be. His limp was a distinction rather than a disfigurement. He was tall, and he stooped a little at the middle, after the manner of Englishmen the world around. He was thin. The sun of the desert had bitten through his skin down into the flesh beneath. Relief had come into the eyes of the wife of the governor when Matilde had presented him. He wore a uniform—one that he had gotten at Bombay through the kind offices of Hansen.

He was courteous and pleasant, but if he saw the gala dress in which Government House had decked itself, it left him unimpressed. The lights hanging low in the trees and casting faint luminescence around them upon the flowers and

grasses of the gardens seemed to annoy him, and he walked with his head thrown back and the steady phosphorescence of the moon in his eyes. Sometimes he stooped a little toward the tiny woman beside him, into whose charge he had been given, and that woman, noting his mood, adapted herself to it. Dreams hung about him, she thought, and the tang of the desert. Loving loneliness, he had brought it with him out of vast spaces and many years, that he might fold it around him like a cloak in the seething world to which he had returned.

Matilde had chosen to arrive early at Government House, before Natalie. As soon as formalities were over, and after the required obeisance to the little flower-garlanded princess, who stood taking heavy-eyed note of the strange creatures who had usurped her kingdom, she led Bingham out into the grounds of the palace.

Following the border of one of the two lagoons which balanced the great rambling building on either side, the two came at last to a spot where no swinging lanterns had been swung, and where the noise of the palace was only a distant and pleasant sound.

Dropping down upon a rug that had been spread close to the water, Matilde looked up at Bingham, who still stood. Under the tall palms, beside the wide expanse of the lagoon, she was like some doll that had been left in a spot dedicated to grown folks. The elfin quality in her attracted the man. Studying that, he noticed her eyes. Mystical eyes, like the eyes of women of the East, which peer out forever at life over the fold of a yashmak; strange, beautiful eyes.

Overcoming the slight difficulty which his stiff knee presented, Bingham sat down beside her, and suddenly he felt himself at home.

"You were at Gallipoli?" she asked.

"For a while." He smiled and was

silent. One could be silent with a woman whose eyes were like that. Matilde let the silence last, and finally Bingham spoke again.

"In Eastern countries there are lagoons like this, with the moon hanging low and looking at herself in the mirror they upturn."

"You know the East, then?"

"I have forgotten everything else, except the East."

"You are, perhaps, one of the wise men come out of the East?"

"I wonder if a wise man would come out of it."

A ship's band, brought up from the harbor, struck into a throbbing, sensuous dance tune behind the opened windows of the palace. The music, quieted by distance, was washed across the lagoon in monotonous, passionate waves of muffled sound. Matilde leaned back, supporting herself by her hands. There were gold threads in the fragile brown of her dress that shone under the moon as did the gold flecks of her eyes. She spoke, and her voice was like a little murmuring, wistful theme running through the night and the music and the placid marvel of the moon.

"Perhaps, to prove you are a wise man, you will some day go riding back upon your camel into the East."

"Yes," he said simply. "I am wise enough for that. I am wise enough to go back—to Arabia."

Again the wisdom of the serpent was Matilde's. She sat silent with the moon in her eyes, and after a while his voice took up its burden.

"Arabia," he said, "the cradle of the race. Out of it came Sheba, with the gauze of her train so sewn with jewels that twenty men were not enough to carry it. In it stand cities older than Rome, older than Babylon, older than Troy. Cities guarded by the sand, piled stone upon stone with such mastery that the weight of centuries has not yet crushed them in."

"Dead. Cities of the dead." Matilde's voice was the chanted chorus to the thing he told.

"Cities of the dead—all but one. I had been a long time journeying. I had followed the desert and the cities of the desert far to the south when I found one with a point of life in it sufficient to compensate for the death of many nations. The city had long avenues of sand, bordered by massive stone. Lord, what engineers they were, those men who wrought for Sheba and the sires of Sheba! I had been a long time upon my way. I was used to sand that flowed and piled like a fluid. I listened as I entered for the whispering sound of the flowing sand, and I heard a man singing. I followed the sound of the voice through avenue after avenue of lofty, splendid emptiness. And I came upon a garden. The garden ran down and lost itself in the desert that lay behind the city. The voice filled it. I followed the voice and came upon a man, planting. So Adam might have planted in that other garden, surrounded by the death which is life yet unbegun. There was a house in the garden, and Eve stood in the doorway. I knew why the voice of the man filled the garden when I saw the woman."

"A man planting and singing," murmured Matilde.

"English he was, or, more probably, colonial. Tall and slender, with the smile of a poet around his mouth. He was planting cane—cuttings of cane. He had turned part of the water by which the garden lived onto the desert. He was starting a plantation. There was something holy about the way he worked, about his love for the woman. He had the air of destiny about him. I think he was Adam. He told me about a tide that——"

Matilde stirred.

"There are people that I must see," she said. "I go now up to the house."

"Oh, I say," her companion objected,

"don't drag me under roof a night like this. I can't dance, you know."

"Wait here. I will be back." And she was gone.

The wife of the governor saw her flitting from guest to guest. When at last she stood talking to Natalie she beckoned to Matilde.

"Don't," she said uneasily. "Whatever it is you are about to do—don't."

Matilde reached for the motherly hand. The little princess smiled sleepily. She could understand acts of affection, nothing else.

"I must," Matilde said. "Can't you understand? I do what I must."

"Whatever it is, leave Mrs. Tavenner out. She has danced like a madwoman ever since she arrived."

"I can't leave her out. She is to be the principal guest at my breakfast."

"Breakfast! My dear——"

"I'm having them to breakfast. We go right from here to the monastery."

"Dear, think me a meddlesome old woman if you like, but I must ask you to remember that Alol is a small community and a gossipy one. Have a breakfast, if you want one, but have it some morning after your guests have had their normal and rightful sleep."

"I have already invited my guests. I cannot postpone my party."

"If I ask you to? If I make it very specific that I ask you to postpone your party?"

"Still I cannot do it."

The wife of the governor was a woman of long patience and sweetness, but now she turned her back upon the affront to her authority. An impulse to weep and wring her hands and beg forgiveness took Matilde. Instead of that, she sought out Natalie again.

"I am going now to make ready," she laughed. "You must not fail to come. There is an Englishman, a traveler who comes to us from a strange end of the earth with many tales of people who are lost."

Natalie answered with a hard, acquiescent laugh. Her nerves shrieked to a thousand proddings of a thousand devils of fear. She wanted to follow close upon Matilde and this bugbear of an Englishman, to snatch at the words they spoke together, to stop the breath in their throats before that breath pilloried her before the world as a woman despised and deserted, a woman who had failed to hold her husband. How Philip Tavenner should pay for this suffering he made her endure—how he should pay!

As soon as the graying of the night showed that dawn was somewhere close below the level of the sea she had her car called. The prospect of the ride, alone with her thoughts and her fears, terrified her.

"You may go," she said to the chauffeur. "I will drive myself."

Disapproval of his employer had been growing upon Holcum for many months. It had begun in amazement at the changed conduct of this erstwhile model of all that the most self-respecting servant could wish to serve, and it had gone on from astonishment to alarm, and from alarm to flat disapproval. Now it reached beyond disapproval into disgust. Any woman who would ride on the front seat of a big closed car—

"Very well, madame," he said meaningfully. "Thank you, madame."

Natalie experienced the relief that the wheel in her hands usually afforded her. She stepped on the accelerator, roared up the cliff road, and backed onto the spur. The danger of it, the sheer descent falling away below, the morning air blowing clean and sweet, steadied and strengthened her. Once, in the momentary health that filled her, she thought to turn above the promontory and go home to Tavenner House, leaving her tormentor with nothing to torment. For a second the thought

flashed upon her that the gossip of Mayou was of small account; that women had been deserted before; that it mattered not at all if others whispered behind their hands and laughed. Then her vanity turned and lifted itself in her again, and she drove on toward the monastery. The Englishman—where had he been? Who were the lost ones he had seen?

Matilde had set her feast with all the delicacy of an inquisitor trimming out a torture chamber with flowers, and spreading a table over the rack it concealed.

From the great chair, with Bingham beside her, Matilde waved her guests to their places. The night had made no ravages upon herself or her gown. The gold threads running through the brown of her tulles gave back the morning sun no less delicately than they had reflected the moon above the lagoon. Her beauty, the strange, almost indiscernible beauty that one must study to find, but, having found, can never lose again, was odder, paler, more significant than it had been through the hours before. For the first time Natalie Tavenner looked at another woman and felt herself haggard.

"Damn her," she said under her breath. "Damn her." And then she laughed and took her place at table.

It was farther from Bingham than she could have wished. No straining of her ears could catch the murmuring of his voice as he talked to Matilde, or of Matilde's as she answered him. But she did strain toward that murmuring so intently that the whole table caught her interest.

Matilde looked up in the confusion of a hostess caught at neglect of duty. "Ah, forgive!" she cried. "I become so absorbed in the story of an Englishman in the desert—"

"Stop her! Stop her!" screamed Natalie's apprehensions, but her lips were frozen dumb.

"In a ruined city, it was, the ancient ruined city of Haradd. One garden grew in all the wreck of centuries around, and one little perfect house was standing. And there Major Bingham came upon a man, singing and planting. What do you think it was he planted? Cane. The cane of the sugar! And the woman, for joy of whom he sang, stood in the doorway of the tiny, perfect house, looking on. But"—she turned anxiously to the man in uniform beside her—"alas, the picture is spoiled for me now, for I recollect that the sun of Arabia is hot, and that the woman's beauty must have been spoiled."

"No," answered Bingham. "The sun had not harmed her. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

"What strange things! Beauty and song together in the desert." Again Matilde's voice was but a murmuring chorus to the things he had to tell, and again Bingham fell under the spell of it.

"Nothing is strange," he said, "nothing—except the usual. The man and I fell to talking the night I was there, and he told me of a tide that governed the destinies of his family. A tide governing the destinies of men is unusual—but not strange."

Silence, so appalling that the falling of water in the courtyard was like the jangling of some metallic thing, fell upon the table. Natalie's inward screams quieted. Now was the time for action, not for nerves. She steadied herself.

"How amusing," she said, resorting to the phrase that covers all British stress. Then she rose from her place at table, arranging the draperies of her creamy dress as she did so.

"I, too, have some interesting news," she said. "My husband is coming home. It will not be long, now, before he arrives in Mayou. You undoubt-

edly have been immensely amused by this party of Matilde's. But I shall give a welcoming party to my husband when he comes, which I think you will find even more entertaining than this one. And now you will excuse me." She nodded brightly again to Matilde. "You understand why I must leave, I think. I have two plantations to ride over before the heat of the day begins."

She flashed into the sun out of the cool, morning shadows of the cloister. The big car swung around the drive, shot through the gate, and roared away toward the cliff.

Nobody at the table spoke. If the ghost of suspicion had long been among them, the materialization of knowledge now sat at the board around which the gossips of Mayou were gathered. Only Bingham, looking out where the sea flashed blue between the palms, was unconscious of the thing that had occurred.

In the gold-flecked eyes of Matilde Rinet terror crept, hand in hand with a pain that was worse than terror. She herded her guests away, then, tiptoeing to her room like a frightened child, lay down on the great bed that had been ripped from a Spanish ship, and stared at the velvets moving in the morning wind above her. For a long time she lay there.

What had she done—what—what? She had meant her revenge to reach only to Natalie, never to Philip Tavenner. With the rest of Mayou, she had loved Philip Tavenner as a subject might love a kind and brotherly lord. Now she saw the machine of her own building reaching beyond the purpose for which it was intended, tearing with the claws she had given it at a loyalty her heart cherished. Natalie would find Tavenner in the city of Haradd, drag him to Mayou, revenge herself upon him! What had Matilde Rinet done! What had she done!

CHAPTER VIII.

Madelaide Fleming stood under the broad, marble lintel of a doorway that might have come straight out of the Old Testament, and shaded her eyes with her hand. Tamarisk plants with their small flowers of white and pink were in full blossom, but through the cool density they made there seemed to be a distant thickness of the air, as of dust. Coming down the marble flagstones that led from her doorway to the foot of the garden, she again shaded her eyes with her hand, and studied the horizon.

Like a sea frozen into high, sharp waves, the desert stretched away until the blue calipers of heaven cut it into an arc that fitted against the sky. Blurring the straight, sharp line where blue and yellow met was a cloud. Certainly a cloud of dust.

She did not call to Philip. He was at work, and the song he sang as he worked filled the garden. A planter always, his joy had been full when El Hadi had come and brought him cuttings with which to start a field. The cloud on the border of the desert now was undoubtedly El Hadi. For all that there was food in abundance about them, El Hadi felt a grave responsibility for the two whom he had brought into the desert. The garden grew figs and melons and grapes and olives. Corn, seeded perhaps from the granaries of Joseph, still grew in wild abundance through the streets of Haradd, wherever hidden springs seeped upward to nurture it. There were small, shy deer that ran fleetly through the ruins, descendants of gazelles brought by the king to glad the eyes of the girl he loved. But for all this providence of God around his charges, El Hadi came flying along on the wide strides of his camel, his panniers stuffed with the most prosaic of tinned things, for which he bargained re-

3—Ains.

morselessly with such British travelers as came to his inn.

The cloud on the horizon could be no other than El Hadi. And yet—

She left the marble-flagged path for a tangle of tamarisk and small, vivid, roseline plants. Penetrating this she came into an ordered region of lateral lines and measured plantings, where a man sang as he worked.

"Some one is coming," she said.

He came and stood beside her.

"It is probably El Hadi," she assured him, and reassured herself.

"Yes," he answered her and smiled.

But they both knew it was not El Hadi.

They came together to the end of the marble-flagged path, hand in hand, and awaited the messenger.

He came from the British consul at Maskat. He was surrounded by a bodyguard of Bedouins. He brought a letter.

Tavenner took the letter, and together with Madelaide went up the pathway and into the room back of the massive doorway. It was a lofty room, mosaic ceiled, and with a water mirror reflecting the arches and color above. Madelaide sank down on the border of the pool and let one hand fall into the cool, still water. There was a long window, latticed with a filigree of marble as delicate as lace, by which light entered through the southern wall of the house. Tavenner went to the window and stood under it, reading the letter.

It was a calm letter, couched, as it was, in phrases of almost legal formality. It stated that affairs connected with Tavenner House and the Tavenner estate, not having been adjusted according to certain laws of transfer immediately previous to the departure of Philip Tavenner, were in a state of great confusion. Both through her knowledge of Philip Tavenner, and through the evidence of assignments

made to her during the early days of their marriage, Mrs. Tavenner knew there was no intention to defraud her of the maintenance to which her labors, as manager of the estate, entitled her. But unless the definite transfer of certain papers was accomplished immediately, she stood to be rendered penniless, and the estate to fall into decay. Philip-Tavenner need not be reminded that, had he died, there would have been courts to take his affairs in hand and to protect his widow. But since he had merely disappeared, the case was different and there was no machinery of law of adjustment to which the abandoned woman could turn.

Natalie concluded her letter with an appeal to him, restrained, short, but poignant.

"Since worldly possessions are all you have left me," she added in a postscript, "I think you will see the necessity of assuring them to me."

Philip crossed the room and gave the letter to Madelaine.

"You must go," she said when she had finished reading it.

Philip stood facing across the water mirror, his face set and white.

"She is lying," he said.

"Nevertheless, you must go."

"Madelaine, all of life is here for me—here in this house and this garden."

"You will be afraid—I will be afraid—that, after all, she was not lying in that letter. We will have no peace. The beauty of our life will be destroyed."

"I tell you, she is lying. The first thing she did when she came to Mayou was to get what management of the estate she could into her hands, and to safeguard herself against any contingency."

"I cannot live here, if I fear another woman is suffering because of me."

"But, Madelaine, our life——"

"The tide brought us together,

Philip. Do you think the puny accidents of the world can undo the work that the tide has done?"

"But if I go?"

"I will wait for you, Philip. I will wait here, and tend your planting, and sing as you have sung. I can do it, because I know that a thing as strong as the tide of the Tavenners can never be turned back upon itself."

Tavenner caught a boat at Maskat, transferred at Bombay and again at Mindanao, from which point he came by a small windjamming trader to Mayou. Landing by means of a ship's boat alone at night, he walked swiftly along the deserted water front, past the darkened club over the promontory road and through the fields. He entered Tavenner House by the open French window. As though she had had announcement of his coming, Natalie was waiting. The organ was silent, but she sat before it upon the carven bench, white and tall, a long string of creamy pearls about her throat. She turned when she heard his step as he crossed the casing of the window, looked at him for a moment, and laughed. The laugh was strange to him; the cold, blue jewels of her eyes gleamed with a fire that leaped and consumed, but had no warmth. Hope left him suddenly, rendering him weak and deadly ill. No word of greeting passed between the two. Tavenner felt the teeth of a trap close upon him.

Nevertheless he struck out for the accomplishment of the errand upon which he had come.

"I will send Holcum for the notary in Alol," he said. "We can sign whatever is necessary to-night. I have arranged for the boat by which I came to sail before morning."

"I have made other arrangements," Natalie responded. "You are probably tired now. Would you like to go to your room?"

"Tavenner House is yours. I have

come back to insure that against any accident of the law or of fortune. It is yours. I have no room here."

"On the contrary, one half of Tavenner House is yours. You will find everything so conveniently adjusted that you will be able to live in your half, and I in mine, without the unpleasantness of contact. We need only pretend to be happily conjugal when we are in public. At such times as we appear before Mayou, or any portion of Mayou, we will, of course, adopt such outward show of happiness together as is proper for persons of our station. At other times we will experience to the full the joy of leaving each other alone. And now I must insist on your going to your room. Everything has been planned for a festival to celebrate your home-coming. Since you came to-night the festival will be to-morrow night, and I must be up early to notify our friends. Wasn't it thoughtful of me, Philip, to decide on a native feast in celebration of the return of a Tavenner? Who knows but the tide may run?"

"I am leaving Mayou before morning."

Natalie came close to him, so close that he backed away. Her lips stretched themselves in a thin and savage line over her small white teeth.

"You think you will be allowed to leave? To go back to her? To abandon me once more to the eyes and tongues of Alol? I tell you, you will not leave this island again until we go together to England."

"You are mistaken, Natalie. As soon as the papers, of which you spoke, are put in order, I shall return to the place from which I came."

"In order!" She threw her head back and laughed again. "Do you think I was such a young and simple fool when I came to Mayou as to leave papers and settlements to care for themselves until such a contingency as

this arose? Long ago, when I first came from England I saw what I must do, and I did it. If you had not been a fool, you would have known. I will allow you to come back now and assume management of the plantation, but only because a woman is dignified by the dignity of her husband, and I wish to resume the dignity which has been shaken by your dereliction. But Tavenner is mine for as long as I live."

"In which case I need not stay—"

"Stir one foot from Mayou without my consent, and the wrath of the whole world will come down upon you."

"I do not think I care about the world's wrath."

"And upon her."

"Natalie!"

"Do you happen to know the intricate tortures of the English divorce courts? Do you know what they do to women? Even women from the most obscure stations of life once they come into the divorce courts finding themselves caged and hung above the highway to be stoned by the crowd."

"Natalie!"

"And as for Madelaine Fleming! Do you recollect the London hebdomadaries, Philip? If so, you will remember that many of them live by stripping and flaying women and flinging them aside, only to pick them up to be stripped and flayed again. What a mine of news my opening of divorce proceedings would provide them! The disappearance of Madelaine Fleming was a seven days' wonder. But her reappearance, together with the story of her whereabouts during the time the world thought her lost, would furnish copy sufficient for seven years."

"I think I will kill you."

"No, you won't kill me. That is the cream of the joke. You will want to kill me, and you never will. It will be your punishment to go on, year after year, your fingers aching for my throat, yet—"

"I tell you, I am afraid of what I shall do to you."

She laughed again.

"That is it. You are a coward. You are afraid of what you will do, and so you will not do anything. I am not a coward. I am not afraid, either of the thing I am doing now, or of the thing I threaten to do. Remember that when your thoughts stray back to Madelaine Fleming. And now, good night. Your rooms are in the west wing. I shall not see you again until it is time for Holcum to take us to the beach. You will like your party, Philip. All of Alol is intrigued with certain rumors about you. You may have questions to answer. Be sure you do it judiciously. A show of our joy in being together again might prove efficacious against gossip which has already started. We shall use it. And now—good night."

News that the master of Tavenner had returned was carried through Alol by the hundred agencies that small and isolated towns afford. House boy conveyed the information to house boy in pidgin English, tradesman gave the news to shopper together with his change, husband telephoned home to wife, consulate brought the word to club, and club carried it on to other consulates. But more direct, if not so fancifully suggestive as these, was Natalie's telephone.

Matilde Rinet was out in the courtyard of her house when her house boy told her that she was wanted on the phone by Tavenner House.

"I called you first off," Natalie said in her silveriest tone, "because I thought you would be more interested than other people. Philip returned last night. The family is reunited. And the party on the beach is for eight o'clock to-night."

"Where on the beach—where?" Matilde asked the question more to gain time for thought than to solicit information.

"That is the best part of it—the surprise for Philip. Under the promontory."

"No! Oh, no! Even if you have no feeling, it is like a grave to him. It will be like a grave."

"Don't be morbid, Matilde. You never have been before. It is an interesting point, everything considered. And who knows? Perhaps the tide will run again."

CHAPTER IX.

As though the spirit watching over Mayou heard a summons, and after long breathing upon the little island now inhaled deeply in preparation for some action it must take, air left the coral shores and forests and fields of the spot of fertility and life it had created in the midst of the ocean. The wind that whispered among its palms ceased. The palms stood tall and lifeless, their fronds hanging like tired fingers. Natives ceased to play, and stood in brown, attentive ranks along the shore, watching the water upon which the dancing waves had flattened. One by one the shutters of the consulates and houses in Alol closed against the unenlivened heat that fell and lay about them, heavy and wet and still. Guards upon the steps of Government House drew back into the shade of porticoes and arches, dripping like men pulled from some hot and enervating bath. Steam generated in the fields and could not rise out of the hanging blades of the sugar grass. One by one such men and women as had the run of its rooms and porches came to the club, and sat watching the dead expanse of blue beyond, waiting.

Only upon the beach under the promontory, had the feeling of the day been defied and driven back. Natalie's energy and wealth and power had accomplished activity there. Shadowed by the rocks under which he had fought

for the life of his child, and lost, a feast was in preparation for Philip Tavenner. A native feast, like, in all ways, to the feasts at which the ancient kings of Mayou were wont to entertain the majesties from other islands of the sea, and at which the gentle gods of the water and the air were propitiated with gifts of flowers and fruit and song.

Matilde had put into operation all her own talent, and all that the memory of Mayou could provide. A long, low table of koa wood had been built up from the sand, only so far elevated as to permit of a kneeling, crouching attitude in the guests. Rush mats, woven and netted into patterns like lace, were laid upon the powdered coral along each side. Leaves of wild grapes had been gathered from their natural arbors in the forests and laid, after the ritual of native feasts, for a covering to the board. Upon the grape leaves were set cups made from gourds with flattened ends, bowls of shells of coconuts, plates from the great, flat husks of cluster nuts, polished until they shone like copper. There were neither knives nor forks.

Edible flowers, dipped in honey and crystallized in the sun, lay in heaps of colors before the places arranged for guests. Earthen pitchers, cooling now with water, were in readiness to receive and dispense the fermented milk of palms. Rose-colored salt from the mines inland had been patted into crystalline mounds, around which little silver fish, cured to preserve their color and their grace, were grouped.

Palms and vines had been brought down from the hills and set up to form a screen, behind which aged native cooks, bending over batteries of earthen pots and open fires, prepared the traditional food of the kings of Mayou. Behind another screen, the brass drums of a native orchestra were already in place. Singers would come

later, and players upon dull-toned instruments made from gourds and shells and strung with the skin of sharks. Pitchy knots of the inflammable island sandalwood lay in heaps, ready to be lighted and held aloft by native boys in the rocks above the table when the feast should begin.

From the veranda of the club Matilde watched the busy running back and forth. Others were watching, too, as breathless, as stunned as she. Matilde stood it until it seemed to her that she must scream and beat her hands upon her breast, like a savage, frightened at the profanation of a tomb. Then she got up from her deck chair on the veranda, and sought the wife of the governor.

"I am afraid." Her teeth chattered in the heat of the great room, where she found the sweet and august lady at her knitting. "I am afraid of what is happening."

The wife of the governor laid by the little sweater she was making, and the kindness of her hands could not deny itself the stroking of the small dark head that was down upon her lap.

"Afraid, my dear? Afraid?"

"It is terrible. I am afraid for Philip Tavenner, who has returned."

The wife of the governor was no psychic, but she had the intuition which motherhood and wifehood and womanhood yield.

"You are afraid," she said, "because you have digged a pit, and now——"

"I was avenging my brother. The people of our race avenge the hurts that are given to them. I was avenging my brother, and because of my vengeance Philip Tavenner is to be made to eat at a table set upon the grave of his child. It is like some hideous legend—the feast of Atreus——"

"My poor dear," said the matron. "My poor dear. It is always that way with vengeance. It turns upon those we would rather die than harm."

At six o'clock that night watchers upon the club veranda saw the tide begin to creep back upon its sands. Out, it found its way, and out. To the old tide line it went and steadily, noiselessly beyond it. Under the promontory there was no cessation of activity. But high-powered canoes of koa wood, blackened with the burning which had hollowed and shaped them, shot away from coves along the beach, and ran just before the tide, out into the still and glassy sea. In them were the most famous divers and swimmers of Mayou, bribed beyond the point to which their superstition and their fears extended. They were to run out beyond the water, to watch and give warning to the beach when the tide should turn.

Before eight o'clock guests, hushed and expectant almost to fearfulness, came over from the club. Others arrived by car and litter from Alol and the plantations beyond Alol. There was scarcely the sound of a voice. But eyes, which had watched the sea all through the hours of the afternoon, now turned toward the cliff. Natalie would come that way, and with her would be the victim for whom this altar was prepared. Tavenner had returned. The tide was running. Even the most robust among the guests could not but admit the strangeness of the coincidence. Even the hardiest could not but dread the enactment of some supernatural thing, could not but shrink from the table laid for the father upon the grave of his child.

Natalie waved from the cliff. Holcum backed the big car onto the spur, turned it, and dropped it, with consummate mastery, down to the road to the beach. Natalie laughed and called a welcome as she jumped from the car. What response there was was forced and horrible. Hands reached out to Tavenner, and shapes clustered close about him as though to shield his eyes

from the thing that had been prepared for them.

Philip saw, and his face, which had been pale before, went to the color of lead.

And now the burden of the whole night's hilarity having fallen upon Natalie, she took it up in a kind of mad and reckless dance of death. She snatched a gourd cup from the table, and held it to be filled from one of the earthen pitchers, then raised it above her head in the light of one of the torches of sandalwood.

"To my husband!" she called. "The man who came back."

Matilde found her way to a place beside Tavenner at the low table, and knelt as the others were kneeling. Native girls, their garments of woven and painted fiber whispering like silk, came in lovely procession around the table, wooden platters of meats in their hands, baskets of breads and fruits held out before them. The brass drums behind the screens began to beat, the dull-toned instruments to thrum. A voice, high and plaintive, took up a melody of piercing sweetness.

Scarcely a voice but Natalie's was raised at the table; scarcely was the bountiful provision of food and palm milk touched. The governor, cramped at last beyond endurance by the attitude of kneeling which the ritual prescribed, got to his feet and held his cup in his hand.

"The tide is far out," he said, "and it must soon come back. Had we not better pledge our welcome home to Tavenner, and withdraw?"

As though she had but been waiting this added fillip to her Bacchic mood, Natalie brushed aside a vine of the screen and snatched an instrument from the girl who played it.

"Not yet," she cried. "Philip and I are so happy to be together again, we will sing to you the old love songs of Mayou."

And leaning toward Philip, she sang of love—of the gentle and primitive love that the islanders had known and sung when the first Tavenner was washed ashore. Like a man cut from granite, Tavenner knelt, holding each muscle taut against its instinctive recoil.

Matilde could stand his torture no longer.

"Look," she cried pointing to the line of boats lighted by flaming torches of sandal, "they stand still at last. Does that not mean that the tide, also, is still, and after a pause will return? Let us go to my house and watch. Come, Philip Tavenner; come with me."

There were pearls around Natalie's throat. She unclasped them and broke the cord upon which they were strung. A shower of lovely, white orbs fell to the table. Natalie took the largest of these and held it toward a native boy.

"Put down your torch," she commanded, "and run with this. Run over the beach, out to the place where the tide has stopped, and throw it for the divers to find. We will have pearl diving—pearl diving in the tide of the Tavenners—the tide which may take something away from the men of the name, but brings to them, in its place, something they value more."

Philip got to his feet.

"I am going," he said.

Instantly, all wifely solicitude, Natalie was beside him.

"I have sent Holcum away," she said. "You shall drive me home yourself. It will be like carrying your bride over the threshold of your house a second time."

Tavenner made no answer. Holcum had left the car with its nose pointing toward the road up the cliff. Tavenner opened the door and held it for Natalie. Then he walked around to the other side and slid under the wheel. He started the car carefully. His nerves were

jumping and screaming, and he knew that every ounce of restraint he could muster must be laid upon them. The car crept into a start, then gathered speed as it climbed. The road stepped higher and higher along the circling flight that led to the promontory. As though their impulse for escape from the horror on the beach had left them suddenly, releasing its hold upon their wills to a hypnotism which rooted them to the spot, the guests stood staring up at the two who climbed. Natalie saw them, and came close to Tavenner, pressing her shoulder against his arm.

"Have I punished you a little tonight, Philip?" she asked. "Have I made the allegory plain? You see it, do you not? From the grave of his child a certain man made a feast of love and——"

The car came onto the flat of granite-and-coral pavement that topped the cliff. Behind it ran the spur. Behind the spur emptiness dropped away down to the beach. Tavenner shifted the gear into neutral, and, with the engine still throbbing, reached across Natalie and opened the door.

"Please get out," he said. "The turn is dangerous. I am a little unsettled and prefer to take it alone. Stand there at the side of the road until I am headed into the angle."

For answer she snapped the door shut and crept even closer to his shaking body.

"And I think we have put up a show that will stop the tongues of Alol from any wagging that they may have begun," she said. "We looked rather blissful in our reunion, don't you think so, Philip? Don't you think we carried it off rather well?"

"Open that door and get out," he commanded.

She laughed.

"How amusing you are, Philip," she said. "Being a coward, you are afraid to drive onto the spur with me

in the car because you will want so terribly when you are there to drop me over the edge and kill me, have done with the bother of me forever. But you need have no fear of that, because you are also too great a coward to do the thing you are afraid you will want to do. You can't, you know. It would interfere too vitally with certain sweet plans you entertain. Dropping me over the cliff in the car involves dropping yourself over, also. And, if you did that, what would become of the desert in Arabia which is to be made to blossom as the rose?"

"Will you get out?" Tavenner asked again, once more holding back the lock of the door.

"Certainly not. I can't think of anything I should enjoy more than to see you in the grip of a desire to murder me, counteracted by an even greater desire not to murder yourself."

He took her arm and shoved her toward the door. Wrath was in his hand, and a terrible strength shook through his arm.

Physical immunity was a fundamental in Natalie's calculations. She had accepted it as a kind of natural law, operating for her. More certainly than she had known any other element of the many with which she played, she had been sure of Tavenner's inability to strike at her, either in defense or revenge. Her security in any action she had based upon his chivalry. Behind that safeguard she had thought to throw what poisoned weapons she chose into his heart and mind. But now his hand was upon her, gripping, it seemed to her, to the bone of her arm. Now he was pushing her as ruthlessly out of the car, as the veriest bully in the street might push the woman who had displeased him out of his road. They—they were scuffling in the car, and the car hung throbbing over two hundred feet of swimming space!

Toli had been right. The tragedy of

Natalie Tavenner's life, as of his, was that sheaf of cane grass, dropped, impuissant, upon the turf of Tavenner House! She reacted to anger and strength vented upon her person primitively, completely, with a frantic inversion of her whole philosophy. She was in danger. Below her and around her was emptiness. A mechanism that pulsed death was throbbing beneath her. Philip's hands, that should have been on the wheel and the gears, were upon her! She had harassed a creature stronger than herself, and now that strength was turned against her.

Instinct, the heritage of a thousand generations of women behind her, flung her, clinging and crying, against the man whose wrath threatened her. Her weight came across the gear shift of the car, entangling it, sweeping it into reverse. The engine jumped, shooting the car backward upon the spur perilously.

Tavenner tried to disengage himself, and for an eternity it seemed to him as he fumbled frantically for the brake in the tangle of her cloak and gown they hung suspended, with the universe beneath them. Then they began to drop. The body of the car slanted into an incline, shook from some impact—

A shriek tore its way out of Natalie's throat, and pitching herself toward the open door, she leaped. Tavenner caught the brake. Natalie's shriek went thinning away, down—and down—and down, and was still.

The car stood on its incline. There was no other impact, no shooting from rock to rock, while the trees of the cliff spun around. The length, which had endangered it at the turn on the road above, saved it as it fell. Its front wheels still clung to the promontory. Its rear wheels were embedded among the fallen and rotted palm stems of the ledge where Madelaine Fleming had once lain to watch the tide of the Tavenners run.

It was Matilde Rinet, light on her tiny feet, strong in the fingers of her jeweled hands, who reached Philip Tavenner. He was descending the cliff, clinging to vines, dropping from foothold to foothold in the coral-and-granite wall. She climbed to a rim of rock, troughed deep by centuries of seepage from the height above, and waited until he fell upon it.

"Do not go on," she said, touching him gently upon the shoulder. "It is of no use. Others are attending. She fell into a cup of coral. She lies within it as beautiful as a Venus washed up by the sea."

"She is——"

"Dead. There are no hurts upon her, no ugliness."

A wind came clean and sweet from some outer spaces of creation. Reaching for the vine by which he had descended, Tavenner drew himself to his feet, and stood with it beating against him. Matilde pulled herself up beside him.

"Look!" She pointed to the sea. Lighted by the torches of sandalwood with which they had been provided, the high-prowed canoes, that had marched in such stately order before the ebbing tide, had broken ranks, and were fighting their way over piling water, out to

the calm that lay beyond. The boy who had run with the pearl came skimming back, calling in fright as he came. Behind him a plume of water, as fleet as he, ran high and curled and proud, above a scroll that unrolled itself toward the land.

"The tide comes in," Matilde whispered.

"The tide," Tavenner repeated.

Her voice was hushed and reverent.

"The tide," she said. "It is for you, Philip Tavenner, and because it brings you a gift I rejoice. If it were for me, it would bring to me my Toli. Perhaps some day it may be so—a lesser tide than the tide of the Tavenners, but so blessed that it will bring my brother, whom I mourn, strengthened by many chastenings as I have been strengthened, ready as I am to kiss the hand of God that corrects me."

"The tide," Tavenner was whispering. "The tide."

"The ever-recurring miracle, my friend. It comes, bringing its gift to you. It has touched far shores, that tide, Philip Tavenner. It has washed other islands of the sea. It has come from the shores of Arabia."

He reached down and took her hand. It clung to his in friendliness. It gave back his clasp upon it.



THE recent purchase in London by an American firm of a Gutenberg Bible, the first book ever printed with movable type, recalls the words of Harry Stevens, who said of another copy of the same book: "Pray, sir, ponder for a moment the rarity and importance of this precious consignment from the Old World to the New. Not only is it the first Bible, it is the first book ever printed. It was read in Europe half a century before America was discovered. Please suggest to your deputy that he uncover his head while in the presence of this great book. . . . It is not possible for many men ever to touch or even to look upon a page of a Gutenberg Bible."



A Marriage for a Year

By Beatrice Ravenel

Author of

"The Revival," "The Ways of Deliverance," etc.



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Lady Deemsworth, visiting in Cairo, met there Ivor Grantley, a young American with whom she had been in love for some time. She found, to her despair, that he had fallen in love with Lucilla Richmond, a young girl whom Lady Deemsworth was chaperoning. Lucilla's father, hopelessly ill, was urging on his daughter a safe marriage with Roy Darrett, an eligible young financier. The girl wavered between this security, and the romantic devotion offered her by Ivor.

On an excursion to the Great Pyramid, Lucilla and Darrett were separated from the rest of the party. On their return to the hotel very late at night, Lucilla finds herself in the compromising situation of being abandoned by her chaperon to the misconceptions of the little world of tourists and foreigners. Lady Deemsworth threatens to cut her publicly, unless she announces her engagement to Darrett, hoping, by forcing the girl into marriage with Darrett, to remove her from Ivor's reach.

Darrett, overjoyed at the unexpected fulfillment of his hopes, promises that if, at the end of a year of marriage, Lucilla is not in love with him, he will set her free—without, he implies, subjecting her to the ordeal of divorce.

LUCILLA DARRETT stood over the sundial. She was performing an operation as affectionately delicate, as though she had been a young mother clipping the duck tails of her first-born for the first, precious time. She was trimming the ivy which covered the green-bronze pedestal, and which had begun to throw shoots, too young to realize their own impertinence, across the face.

Spring along the Hudson is, perhaps, spring at that golden mean which is most desirable. It lacks the long-drawn-out, gradual revelation of spring in New England, where it turns slowly, like a girl in her new frock, to show all its points. Still less has it the wild explosion of spring in the South, where it bolts into the arena like a dancer on horseback. It merely comes and car-

ries one along with it, naturally as a comrade.

Darrett Manor was throwing a veil of evanescent willfulness over the formality of its landscape gardening. Trees flung out uncontrollable bursts of green. Flowering peach and quince planted banners of revolt along the walks. The flowers in the flat, measured borders defined themselves without shyness. Tulips like rows of tiny lanterns; jonquils clear as embroidery; fat and patrician hyacinths, well-nurtured and self-satisfied. Along the very edge, a massed row of crocus buds stood out, as though painted on porcelain.

There was the same clear decision in the warm tones of Lucilla's hair, in the faint warmth of her flesh tones. The candid values were accentuated by her frock and hat of transparent black. She

clipped away, a scrap at a time, worrying out trails from under the leaves, feeling after the perfect circle, with an absorption that was rather amusing.

It did not seem to amuse her husband. He stood a little way off, in the curve of the hedge which held the sundial, for all the world, as Lucilla said, like a green band holding a wrist watch. He looked at his wife with that somber detachment which had become almost habit of late: as though she belonged to another world, which he could perfectly well see, but which was separated from him by some diaphanous but impenetrable substance.

"Why don't you let the gardener do that?" he asked, really for the sake of removing the silence.

The scissors stood still. She paused, as though expecting him to say something else. Then the blades made a cynical snip before she answered.

"He makes it so stiff—like a row of mutilated stumps; leaves half cut through. I'm arranging it like a wreath, with the dear little new ones on top."

"I see," he agreed. He waited a moment more, waiting in his turn for the significant, the vital something to come from her. A gust of wind lifted the trees, then sank like a discouraged sigh before the stupidity of humans.

Darrett turned and went slowly toward the house, swishing the hedge with his riding crop. There was a top layer of bright green all the way. On the side porch stood an old, high settle of wood, heart-shaped apertures cut out of the back. He paused, as though to sit down; then changed his mind and went through the door. It was as though Lucilla's eyes, straining after him, could follow him still. He would stop to glance at the tall, mahogany clock, which stood just inside; he invariably did. Then he would probably order his horse around, and go wandering off until lunch time, noticing other people's truck and fruit trees, and pre-

pared to give the entire vegetable census of the county on his return. He adored that sort of thing. He was a born country gentleman.

So that was all he had to say: "Why don't you let the gardener do that?" Perhaps he had forgotten. Curious that a man, who had been so utterly in love only a year ago, should forget the anniversary of his own marriage. He might, at least, pretend that it was a joyful occasion.

Her head gave a slight toss that was very courageous and very much hurt at the same time. Well, one had to talk about the little things when the big ones were impossible. That was what her life seemed to be reducing itself to: little, trivial things, little beautifications of the perfect house—as for household tasks, the servants wouldn't understand her intruding on their territory at all—little fringes of the arts, prettinesses that passed the hours, but without giving one the oblivion of a great talent; little charities. The big ones preferred having their work done by trained specialists, and wanted just as much of your time as was requisite for writing a substantial check. And last and worst, there was the refuge of small talk with one's own husband.

So she had been married a whole year. A whole year since that wedding in Egypt, where the spring is not like a comrade but like a lover, where the wonder of living saturates one like sunshine. Yet they called Egypt the land of death. There was that astonishing description of Gautier's: "From the inflamed pupil of that sky of bronze no tear has ever yet fallen upon the desolation of this land; it is only a vast covering for a tomb—the dome of a necropolis." There was that, too. But for her, Egypt was the land of romance, romance shadowed by death. Perhaps there was a curse on the land, a curse shared by those who loved it. Well, the curse had fallen on her, the curse of

little things. She had them now, instead of the one, great thing that she had wanted, that would have absorbed and fulfilled her.

The shadow of death had been there from the beginning. It had been her sudden realization of what her marriage meant to her father, that had made her consent to hurrying it on. He was going to die soon—soon—and he wanted to be sure that she was safe and happy first. He had never known that her happiness was in the slightest jeopardy. He had gone, satisfied and at peace. It had been this that had sanctified to her this step which, in every other way, had seemed all wrong, all unnatural.

And Roy had been an angel. It was wonderful how understanding and good Roy had been. For a while it had come to her, like a faint possibility of the future, that one day she might love him. She had even been tempted to make him feel this, in some way. But there she drew back. There was a wall, an impossibility. Deep in her, deeper than anything else, she thought, there was a wounded place, a sore, thwarted pride that could be coerced no farther. She had been forced into marriage. Her will had been not subdued, but held in unwilling abeyance. She had not been a free agent. She could never forgive that. It was all wrong, the teaching that was drummed into girls, that submission to others was a beautiful trait. Submission to the will was a degradation. Afterward came not peace, but utter confusion of mind, bafflement. She knew now only that she was a creature divided against itself, not sure of what she felt, or of what she wanted.

She went slowly toward the porch. Just before she reached it the side door opened, and a woman came out and stood waiting, with a kind of twinkling brightness on her plump, middle-aged face. She was very modishly dressed on a firmly restrained foundation. When Lucilla arrived within embracing

distance, she took her by the shoulders and kissed her warmly on both cheeks. Then she held her off and kissed her again, as though the first brace might have been inspired by affection, but this was a tribute of pure admiration.

"I hope you don't mind, my dear," she caroled, "but you are so nice. I came to congratulate. Can't stay but a minute. By the way, I brought you a token. You might plant a vine in it, that would hide it nicely. I met an exotic person selling transparent antiques at your gates, so I bought this, thinking it appropriate. Egyptian, you know."

Lucilla took the little wall vase of brown, pink-decorated pottery, and returned thanks not too plausibly. In her present state of mind no gift could have seemed so inopportune. Mrs. Glenning had a way of doing the well-intentioned, slightly jarring thing. She was an old friend of the family, and, as she herself said, presumed on it.

"I suppose Roy gave you something so dazzling, that all other offerings will be lost in the blaze," hinted the visitor. She spoke with a slight, panting hesitation, a habit that made people take her words less seriously than they were meant, because they sounded humorous.

Lucilla met her pleasant eyes. She was tired of pretending that everything was right. Out of her weariness she spoke the truth.

"Roy gave me nothing. There is no reason why he should."

"My dear!" Mrs. Glenning's face lost its upward curves in a truly miraculous manner. She was not comical any longer; she was so simply grieved and wondering that Lucilla's hardness melted toward her.

"He's given me lots of lovely things," she said hurriedly. She moved a cushion invitingly on the settle, and her visitor sat down, drawing Lucilla down beside her.

"My dear," she began, "everybody

hates meddlesome old women, but sometimes their meddling does some good. Now I've often thought that I've usurped the privileges of a mother-in-law with you. Roy was my boy's best friend, you know, and since—since Len died in France, he's been my *only* boy." She smiled, anxious, with the instinct of her breeding, to spare the other the embarrassment of looking on the naked heart of another human being. "Sometimes I've felt that I'm better than a member of the family, because, if you don't like what I say, you can ignore it afterward; you can even cut my acquaintance. What's the matter between you and Roy?"

"I don't know," said Lucilla woodenly.

"If there were ever two young people who ought to be happy, it's you two," marveled the visitor. Her glance strayed over the garden, bounded by its grove of swaying, dancing boughs, tip-toe with the exhilaration of spring. "You have everything. And, as it can't possibly be Roy's fault—I speak as a mother-in-law—it must be yours. What have you done to him?"

No idea of resenting this plain speaking came to Lucilla. She felt refreshed, as though some clearing-up had taken place.

"I suppose so," she said, as much to herself as to the other. "I didn't know that it had been so little of a success that it showed from the outside. I did think we kept up appearances."

"But what's the matter? If there is anything, can't you just bury it, pretend it isn't there, and—and *love* each other, anyway? You often have to do that in married life, Lucilla. You have to remind yourself that the one important thing is love. Everything else is subsidiary, inferior. If you save that, you save your whole life." A curious, wistful youthfulness had come into the kind eyes, too much buried in their plump lids. "Can't you try—that way?"

"You don't understand," the girl cried out fiercely. She dragged her hands away. This importunate kindness was intolerable. It was searching depths of her soul that she herself did not venture into. "It's a deadlock. Nobody can do anything."

Mrs. Glenning sighed. She got up.

"Well, good-by, my dear," she said gently. She uttered none of the usual commonplaces with which interviews of sentiment are smoothed down into the everyday. Lucilla accompanied her to the drive, where the limousine, large and richly upholstered like its owner, stood waiting. There was no good-by kiss.

Lucilla drifted back to the porch. It was the one place where there were neither broad meadows to distract one's thoughts, nor the reaches of river, nor the faintest sounds from the highway. She could be self-centered here, shut in between hedges and trees with a sort of miserable coziness. She picked up the small, Egyptian vase, studying the careless felicity with which the pattern was dashed on.

"I have better things than that: things madame would appreciate," said a soft, ingratiating voice, startlingly near her.

Lucilla stared at the man, wondering why Egypt had chosen this particular day to come back to her. Then a familiarity in the brown-white face, wrinkled into smiles under the red fez, made her check the sharp words of dismissal on her lips.

"I have seen you before," she said. "You are——"

The frock-coated shoulders bent gracefully.

"In Cairo, yes. Mahmud, at your service, dragoman to Lady Deemsworth and to madame. The best references." He waited; then, understanding that she would listen, proceeded. "But I had bad luck. I was a good dragoman, as madame knows. I showed everything—unless there were young ladies present. I was discreet. I did not allow

any one to scratch his name on the beautiful temple columns. I said—not rudely—"If you do, I shall be put in prison, and you—will lose your boat." But—the point came, stressed in the soft, suggestive voice—"I have come here, selling things on the road. They will not hire me in Cairo any longer."

"Why not?" asked Lucilla harshly.

His hands went out, as imploring her not to be angry.

"Since I had the misfortune to lose madame and the gentleman in the desert, they call me not to be trusted." His tone became more and more mysterious. "I am to be trusted. I know the roads—all the roads. I do not get lost—by accident."

He did not wait for her to speak. She understood the cleverness that meant to save her pride. His glance was a feeler, put out to gauge how far she would let him go.

"After all, madame is the protector of the poor. Madame was the innocent cause of my bad luck. And madame was made fortunate by the occurrence. Madame got a rich husband." He made a half circle. "So rich a husband. A palace fit for a khedive."

Lucilla almost laughed through her disgust. With gorgeously Oriental naïveté, he expected her to be grateful for his stupidity, and to make acknowledgment handsomely. With a cynical candor equal to his own, she observed:

"You want me to give you money for that?"

"Not for that. For telling you—who paid me to get lost."

The wrinkles puckered evilly into smiles, seeing how he had scored, at last. Lucilla felt her hands grow cold. She rolled them out of sight in her scarf, as though he could know it. What did he mean? The old, horrible suspicion flooded her again, the old accusation that she had all but made to Roy. What wouldn't a man in love do? Had Roy been base for one single time in his

life, as many men have been, bargaining with his conscience to make it up by a lifetime of devotion? Was it credible that he had bribed this man to stage the melodrama that might force her into his arms? She shook the intolerable thought off. She would not believe it. In the reaction, her pride took the upper hand. She would not even allow herself to ask for the story. How could she trust this snake, anyway? She would ignore his lies.

"I have nothing for you," she told him coldly. "I have no interest in learning anything that you can tell me."

His eyes became black lines. He picked up the suit case which he had placed on the step, and made his profound bow.

"I am sorry. I thought madame would be more compassionate." His words padded the air like velvety strokes from a cat's paw. "I will get help somewhere else. There are other patrons of mine in this country, who will remember knowing me in Egypt." He disappeared around the corner of the house in the direction of the road, always with the effect of bowing obsequiously, ironically.

She sat for a long time, looking straight in front of her, not thinking, but trying to stave thought off by filling her consciousness with the color and movement of the garden. As she often did, she was mentally painting it. The shadow on the path—could one risk charcoal gray, or would the warmer mixture of cobalt and vermilion be better? And the faintest tinge of rose carthamine must go into the pink of the clump of tulips. Dangerous, but nothing else would do. Then the colors blurred as though the glass of water had been upset over the paper. Only the high lights of two white butterflies triumphed, dancing before her eyes.

Egypt! He had brought it all back, the horrible man. Just when you had begun to persuade yourself that it was

possible to forget the old things something would come to preach the doctrine of the immortality of memories. Wasn't she ever to be left to herself this morning? From the direction the Arab had taken, somebody was walking toward her. In another minute she saw that it was her husband. And, automatically, she built up in her mind the scene of his meeting with Mahmud. Of course, that was what the man had meant when he spoke of his other patrons who would help him. Whom should he go to, if not to—

She checked herself fiercely. Oh, this was degrading, it was vile, to think such things of Roy. She wouldn't believe them. And yet, wouldn't a disinterested outsider believe them? The turmoil in her mind made her grasp at her self-control. She encased herself in an indifference like protective armor. A book lay on the settle, left there by Roy this morning. She picked it up and became absorbed in it, without in the least taking it in.

As he stopped in front of her she closed the book, with a finger between the leaves, as though politely annoyed but patiently prepared to endure him.

"Interesting?" he asked.

He looked down gravely, narrowly, with that air of watching that had irritated her lately. It was that feeling of being always in his thoughts that worried her, perhaps, the consciousness of being pressed on, hurried. If he would only leave her to herself for a while. Coercion was the one thing she could not bear. And his love coerced her. Just because she felt the drawing toward him, she held back. He would have to give her time. What was a year? And time by herself—by herself! Not with this continual embrace of his yearning around her. It was tyranny. It was growing too strong and dangerous. She wouldn't be conquered in this last little stronghold of herself, as she had been in every other way.

"Thrilling," responded Lucilla. She turned the book over and read on the back in faded lettering, "Subsoils."

"Willoughby's pear trees look better than ours," he began.

"Do they?"

"Blossoms much fuller. I'll ask him what he sprays with."

"Yes," agreed Lucilla with supreme lack of interest.

There was a pause, during which he kept up the same absorbed look, the look of a man who is running a dark undercurrent of thought under the superficial one.

"Lucilla," he said abruptly, "would you like to go abroad?"

She looked up, slightly surprised.

"I don't know."

"What would you like to do?"

"I don't know," she responded, uninterested. She wanted to be alone, to be spared this foolish, superfluous talk, to get herself calm again. Most of all she wanted to set before her, in an orderly row, all the reasons why Roy couldn't, couldn't have done that dreadful thing. There were reasons, plenty of them, if he wouldn't get in her way, and prevent her from thinking of them. She opened the book again.

"You don't want me around to-day, do you, Lucilla?" he asked.

"I want to think," she said, frowning as the sun struck her eyes.

"All right," he said quietly. A faint smile crossed his face. He touched her hair lightly. Then his hand pressed down in it in a passionate, restrained caress. He went into the house.

For a moment she was tempted to run after him and be a little sweet to him. She had been in a temper. Being unhappy always had that effect on her, which, of course, was unreasonably hard on other people. She would be nicer to him. She would. She didn't believe the dragoman's story. The impulse hung poised. She half rose, then sank back on the settle, suddenly weak.

As though the other events of the morning had been merely premonitions, forerunners to prepare her, another figure came down the path, out of the curve of the hedges. She could not accept the event, not at first. It was too opportune, too much the inevitable climax. Dreams happened that way, not sunshiny, out-of-doors realities.

He held out both hands, and, at the uncertain flutter of hers, the old glimmer of amused tenderness went over his face.

"You can touch me," he laughed. "I won't vanish."

"Ivor," she wondered. "How did you come here?"

She hardly listened to his explanation of business reasons, his family, his mention of the ship, the day of his arrival, though she continued to look questioningly at him. These details didn't matter. What she was asking mutely was, what had become of the golden light, the effluence of happiness that had radiated from him to her? It might come again, but just now she was feeling a curious strangeness, a separation from him. He didn't seem the same person.

Then, as he went on speaking, she realized that he felt nothing of this. He was taking up the relation where he had left it; he was making the old adjustments. Insensibly she found herself slipping back, if not into the old intimacy, at least into the acceptance of his attitude. She found some comfort in it, some warmth. At all events, she could do what she liked with it. She was free, free to send him away, or to let him talk out the purpose which had brought him here. It was entirely different from that overweening consciousness of Roy's love, always in the background, like a crushing responsibility.

And she had no intention of letting Ivor make love to her. A certain fastidiousness, a sense of fair play, prevented her. She forgot that there are more ways of making love than the ob-

vious ones, and that some of them are very difficult to controvert.

"What a jolly place you have here," he commented; "the whole thing." He tapped the settle on which they were sitting. "Old oak, almost a museum piece. And you trust it out here."

"It's always been here. I haven't changed anything."

The keen, comprehending glance passed over the view, down to the shadow-spattered earth and up to the sky.

"No," he observed, "you wouldn't. Other women settled down in this place and took root, like those perennials, but not you. You'll go through it like a butterfly or a mist, and leave not a trace behind. And do you know why? Because you don't belong here. You have nothing to do with it."

Fascinated, she listened. This was Ivor, fantastic, absorbed in her, telling her stories about herself that made her appear like something wonderful, a woman of destiny. He added suddenly, as if the moment had come:

"And you haven't been at ease here, either. You haven't made your nest."

She started to speak. What was the use? He would see through her denials, as he always had.

"You aren't at home." He paused. "You aren't at home—with *him*. You're married to a stranger. Do you think I'm to be deceived in you?"

She dropped a slow look into his eyes. She seemed to be listening to the interpretation of her own mind by some one who knew it better than herself. Now that she looked at him, she saw that he had grown appreciably older. His mouth was bitterer, his eyelids more worn. But the understanding between them drew her irresistibly.

"He ought to set you free."

The abruptness of it broke through the trance that was drowning her. She mustn't let him say such things. The sense of disloyalty to Roy touched her. Then she laughed lightly. There was

only one way of stopping Ivor: refusing to take him seriously.

"Do the poor man justice," she said teasingly. "He did offer to do just that, once."

He glanced uneasily, not knowing whether to believe her.

"I have generally considered it the deepest spiritual cowardice not to treat serious emotions seriously," he retorted. "And cheap."

"But I'm in earnest," she protested gayly. "The night we became engaged, he promised that after a year, if he couldn't make me happy, he'd——"

"Let you go?"

"No, to be exact. He said that *he'd* go."

"A year after that night?"

"No, that's already past. A year from our wedding day."

"To the day."

"He specifically said, to the hour. We were married at noon."

"Don't I remember?" murmured Ivor. "I'll tell you, sometime, how I spent that day. You didn't believe him, did you?"

"Of course not," she answered lightly. "I never even thought of it again, until you suggested it just now. Men don't do such things."

He sat very still, his hand absently rubbing along the arm of the settle until it reached the edge, when the fingers curled themselves around the wood.

"Men don't do such things," he echoed. "Rather decent of him, though, under the circumstances."

"You—know? Who told you the circumstances?" she demanded, roused to a flash of anger. "Then Lady Deems-worth really had *no* secrets from you?" she went on scathingly. "I had an idea that you would be married to her by this time."

"We are not to be married," he answered quietly. "What I meant was, that he probably told you that to make you feel more comfortable, to save your

4—Ains.

face, in a way. Has he ever mentioned it again?"

"No," Lucilla admitted.

"He won't. A man is generally perfectly safe in making an offer of that kind; it's so seldom taken up." His immobile figure came alive again. "But this is the point. He has given you the right to ask for your door of escape, if you want it."

"You don't understand." Lucilla beat her fist on the settle for emphasis. "It doesn't mean what you think. I made it plain to him that divorce is something I cannot bear. There are people like me left, you know, who hate publicity, who feel that marriage is a once-for-all affair. It may be narrow and old-fashioned, but I was brought up that way. He understands that."

"Well?"

"Well," she insisted, "there's only one other way out of marriage."

Their eyes met. Far down in his she saw a movement like the beating of wings. To her expanded mood, the fantastic thought came that a creature had broken out of its shell. Then the lids dropped, lifted.

"Can't say I quite understand."

"Death. He meant that he would kill himself."

He laughed so derisively as to force a rueful smile from her.

"It isn't done. He hasn't mentioned it since, you say? No wonder. What were his exact, romantic words?"

The memory had come back to her. The ghastly midnight; the air of the room still full of the perfume of the woman who was her enemy; the man before her, so protective, so sorry for her; even his voice, saying the words that she repeated now.

"He said, 'In one year, to the minute, if you don't particularly and especially ask me to remain, I shall go.'"

"Lovely; perfectly lovely."

She reassured herself, brushed the memory aside.

"Of course he didn't mean it." Then, uncertainly: "Didn't you say, once, that when Roy started a thing he went through to the bitter end?"

"Did I? Something about a camel, wasn't it? Sublime and the ridiculous. Well, please ask me to stay to lunch. I want to see if anything happens."

"You know this is our anniversary, then? How nice of you."

He swung on her, his face set and ugly, the charming raillery gone.

"Am I likely to forget it? Let me tell you what I did, that day. I invented an official appointment at Alexandria, not to be got out of. I went to an Arab I knew, an expert, as skillful in his way as the Arabic physicians whom kings of Spain used to call in, because the court doctors were children beside them. I'd been lucky enough to do him a service once, and you can count on these people, either for gratitude or revenge, to the limit. He dealt in drugs and administered them. I went to him for the first and last time, and I said to him, 'Give me a dose that will make me dead to this world for twenty-four hours, and see that I don't die or make a fool of myself.' He did. He kept me in his own house, and watched me like a brother. That's how I got through the day."

She did not answer. It was the sort of story one had better ignore. She leaned out and broke off a spray from the rosebush beside the porch; then methodically pulled the bit to pieces.

"What time is it?" she asked then.

He looked at his watch.

"Stopped. I know this, however, it's scandalously early for a morning call. Do you want me to go?"

"Oh, no." She took no notice of the esoteric meaning of his question. She had stripped the leaves from the spray, leaving only two naked little buds.

"I made up my mind that I *would* go, without a word, Lucilla, if I found

you happy—even resigned, acquiescent. But you're wretched."

Putting it into words brought it into a high relief that she could not accept.

"You exaggerate, Ivor, my dear," she responded equably. "I'm quite as happy as most people. Only a little while ago one Mrs. Glenning was telling me the whole list of my mercies, beginning with Roy. According to her, I ought to thank Heaven every night on my knees for a good man's love. Happiness, as an absolute, doesn't exist."

"You were happy once."

"By the way, what time is it?"

He observed her narrowly. "Getting anxious?"

"How absurd." She brushed it aside like a spider web. "But it's inconvenient not to know. I'll go in and look at the hall clock."

"Let me. I'd like to set my watch at the same time."

"Very well. Right inside that door. And correct to the minute."

Languor weighed her to her place. She hated to move. The warming air, the dense, hot smell of vanilla from boxes of heliotrope! They had been grown in the greenhouses, but they fitted in as though they had lived here all their young lives. And she did not fit here. Ivor had said so at once, in the mystic, assured way that cast a spell on her. Something was uncoiling at the bottom of her mind, disturbing her horribly.

When he came back she turned to him, as though he had been gone a long time. He showed his watch.

"Not eleven yet."

"You didn't see Roy anywhere?"

"No."

"He may have gone out again. I—I thought I'd go in at the last minute, just for a joke, and"—she blushed faintly, ashamed of her childishness—"and invite him to stay."

"I thought you would. Like a woman. 'Ah-ha, so you didn't mean it, after all!'

It would be a better joke the minute after the last."

She laughed with him. But the instinct held. To go to Roy, to bring back to him that poignant moment, as it had come back to her, to get through the veil that folded him from her more and more—it was worth trying. Suddenly she got up and went swiftly indoors.

He was not in the hall, nor in the library, nor on the terrace. She glanced at the high clock with the tipsy moon balanced over its dial. When she went back to Ivor his mouth twisted.

"Still a spendthrift," he said, in the tone that put them into a world entirely by themselves. "Still ready to throw away the ultimate jewels of life. If I must go, stay with me for a little while. It's the best you will ever get out of life, poor child. That isn't conceit, Lucie, it's common sense. Take the little, little love that you dole out to yourself."

"I don't love you," she said harshly.

"You have never loved any one else."

"It's too late," she panted. "That's what our sundial says. I read it again this morning. 'It Is Later Than You Think.' Isn't that gruesome?" She drew away from him. "Oh, don't—don't," she implored half pettishly. "Let's be sensible. Some day I'm going to have that chiseled out, and a cheerful motto put in."

"Where is it?" He leaned over her.

"There, in the hedge. Let me show you."

"I'll give you a motto for it." He threw all the glamour of his personality around her, caressing her without touch: "Lovers, pass by. Your dial is the moon."

He stood before her, his arm on the tall wing of the settle, a barrier. His voice fell, deep and rich.

"Lucie, you're not happy. Don't contradict me. The only happiness you have known was what we had together in Egypt. Is there any real joy ex-

cept first love? And that's what you've been living on this past year—the memory of those days. Unforgettable. You've been loyal to that."

She put her hand out to push his arm aside. It was an iron bar. And, with the sensation of his obstinate resistance, her spirit turned against him. He was trying to coerce her, too! Suddenly she became very calm. Deep in her something was laughing ironically. He was so clever, Ivor, and here he was making the fatal mistake. He was pleading the other man's cause. Was this the reason that she had held out against Roy—this loyalty to a sentimental dream? First love? Why, all the romantic fiction written for girls laid the stress on that, didn't it? It was all wrong, all wrong. One could forget that, too, with the rest of the dead past, and go on to something better.

"Let me go," she ordered.

"Listen to me, Lucie. Don't send me away yet. There's nothing on earth so dear to me as you are. Only listen."

The urgency of his tone woke in her not the response he wanted, but a smoldering suspicion that all at once burst into flame. Why was he so determined to keep her there? She looked past him, up to the sky. Her hand went out, as though gauging the heat of the sunshine. Suddenly she crouched, doubled, shot under his arm, as neatly as a wiry boy could have done it. She ran, she raced to the sundial, and stood, her arms rigid, her head held back, so as not to obstruct the light. He followed her. She dodged, and started for the house, flinging broken words at him over her shoulder, gasping in her dread.

"Oh, you wretch," she wailed. "You unspeakable, dishonorable wretch! You put back the clock. You knew he'd keep his word, even if I was such a fool as not to know! I didn't believe it, but you did—oh, you did! You want me to be too late! Look at it—look at it!"

The sun himself was speaking. The

finger of shadow registered a thin, a very thin space before noon.

"Oh, God," she whispered, "don't let me be too late! Don't let me be too late!" Her blood beat like racing feet, racing with death.

She lived a lifetime in the wild flight across the terrace. In the hall, a maid, emerging from a shadowy door, stood rooted, her mouth open, as the mistress dashed around her with a peremptory sound more like a snarl than anything else. Upstairs—oh, how many stairs—numberless, as in a nightmare. She threw open the door of her room. Empty. His own—

It was locked. She battered on the panels. To her absolute horror, her throat closed when she tried to call out his name. Then a succession of animal moans came out of it. Then a thin shriek, at the top of the human voice.

"I ask you to stay! Roy! Roy! *I ask you to stay!*"

The door opened. He caught her as she fell forward. Three impressions came to her like one. The white of his shirt sleeves; the mirror of his chiffonier, moved so as to catch the fullest light; a small, sinister object on the table. He tried to keep himself between it and her, but she slid around him, seized it, and sent it, in a triumphant parabola, out of the open window. Then she closed with him, gripping him as though her clasp could hold him safe from men and demons and misunderstandings forever.

After a while she began to cry. He gave a sigh of intense relief. This white Lucilla with the steel muscles and the held breath was rather terrifying.

"And you didn't even tell me good-by," she sobbed.

"I couldn't say good-by," Roy explained with perfect seriousness. "That would have put the whole thing up to you. You'd have protested; you'd have seen it through. It was just on that

account that I couldn't hold you to it. You weren't happy, darling. Why weren't you happy?"

She tried to tell him. Then she recognized the fact that feelings take a long time to unravel. It was too complicated, too shadowy. Perhaps the real trouble had been the shadow of that deposed pretender, First Love. Or her pride, unreconciled to her forced marriage. Or, perhaps, his own patient forbearance had driven her, like a spoiled child, to take liberties with it.

"Because I was a fool," Lucilla summed it up. She lifted her head from the shoulder where it was buried, and demanded: "Roy, who on earth bribed that dragoman to lose us?"

"Lady Deemsworth, angel. The man was here to-day. He told me."

"I knew it was she," asserted Lucilla, and really believed it.

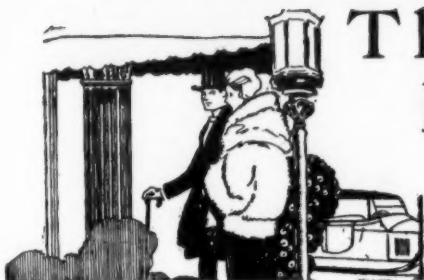
"He said that Grantley broke with her when he found out, and that he's in this country."

"He's in this garden," said Lucilla indifferently. "At least he was. I don't think he'll stay to lunch." She relapsed into her former position. "Oh, I am so thankful for you," sighed Lucilla, closing her eyes. "It's all right, isn't it, Roy?"

Roy pressed his face in the soft puff of hair that curved just over a beating little pulse in the throat. He knew that it was.

In the garden First Love lay bleeding, down and out. But before he took his departure Ivor Grantley uttered what was perhaps the most comprehensive and devastating malediction ever consummated. In three words it annihilated and did away with life, love, and existence, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, including Lucilla and himself, and embracing, finally, the entire solar system.

"Damn the sun!" said Ivor.



The Second Horizon

By Mildred Cram

Author of "Exhibit B,"
"The Funny Man," etc.

SAXE ZARLOFF'S car moved slowly uptown, a shining link in a revolving chain of limousines.

The hour of twilight always stirred in Zarloff ideas not quite comfortable. He wanted to push the motor ahead, to get beyond this fitful purring and sliding to the warm brilliance of his apartment.

Snow had fallen. When the car turned into Central Park Zarloff noticed the whiteness, and a black sky like ice in a mill pond.

Tuesday. He had accepted Mrs. Gilbert Lynn's invitation to dine with her at seven-thirty; had accepted with his tongue in his cheek. Zarloff was no fool.

He was, he knew, being used as dinner bait, a notorious person attached to Mrs. Lynn's hook and dangled in the sluggish waters of social New York. Well, he was a mouthful.

He took Mrs. Lynn's letter out of his pocket and studied it again, holding it between stiff, gloved fingers. His lips curled when he compared this meticulous simplicity with Rose Hara's pink-and-blue stationery garlanded with gilt roses, or the purple-ink effusions of Mary Peyton. Zarloff's desk was always littered with these little letters from pretty little women, beginning: "Dearest Saxe boy;" or: "My own darling Saxe;" or: "Wonderful boy."

Mrs. Gilbert Lynn and the women who used scented note paper were all trying to scoop him into a net because

he was somebody. Civilization had set a standard to which he had measured up.

Even as his motor threaded the Park he could see his name written in electric bulbs and flung upon the horizon: "Zarloff." A flicker. Another blaze: "Star Pictures." Then, "Zarloff" again.

This fame had been a certainty from his first hours of dreaming. Success had advanced to meet him because he had gone with such assurance toward success. He had pictured himself riding in just such a limousine, wearing just such a fur coat, and the image had been so sharp in outline that its realization had caused him no surprise. He was where he had intended to be. A figure. A somebody. Zarloff, president of the Star Pictures, millionaire.

Mrs. Gilbert Lynn had invited him to dinner. This was, perhaps, the beginning of his inevitable social advance.

He had promised Dolly Fox—Well, he must disappoint her. Absurd little creature, minute and exquisite particle of star dust, ready to his hand. The thought of her shadowed his eyes; the hard, bright stare out and ahead gave way to a softness, a sensual blur; his expression was Oriental, not passionate but sardonic.

Had he known, he was a target for more expert arrows. Two men passing in a taxicab caught sight of Zarloff's sleepy, defeated profile as the limousine slipped past. One said to the other:

"That was Zarloff, the movie magnate. He came up from the gutter. Do you know his story? Immigrant. He came from Russia twenty-five years ago. Peddler—in Hester Street, probably; tintype artist; side showman; then a penny-in-the-slot exhibitor. He ran a peep show in Fourteenth Street. Today he is a trust. Brain? Nonsense! He happened to come in on the crest of the movie craze, together with other flotsam and jetsam. He is, if you will pardon my saying so, the Turk of Turks. He sits upon a cushion in the West Sixties and eats flattery from the prettiest, frailest hands in New York. He is one of the reasons why I prefer Colorado to Manhattan. He pollutes the atmosphere."

Zarloff's mind dwelt for a moment on Dolly, as if he were tasting something sweet and sickish. A whiff of cold air, the odor of fresh snow, shifted his attention. Ah! That was good! Snow; Russia; white fields; the crack and squeak of sledges. He recalled the sharp hunger of his spirit in those days. A boy in a peaked peasant's cap dreaming of palaces, horses, wine, food, servants, women. His stark horizon had been picketed with these very skyscrapers that flashed his name against the stars.

God had not entered into his projects. Zarloff was sufficient unto Zarloff even then. He had never respected a man who leaned on the shoulders of superstition. Religion was a crutch for the weak-hearted. Prayer was a coward's baying at the moon. Zarloff had always walked the crust of the merciless earth, unafraid, alone.

The town of his birth had been too small to hold him. He remembered sitting by the stove in his mother's kitchen with his eyes closed for fear that she might see the resolve in them. The smell of frying meat was keen in his nostrils, but his hunger had had nothing to do with food. He had had an appe-

tite for power, for money. He had heard of the silent, white squares of St. Petersburg. He had heard of America. These places lay beyond the gate of his father's house.

His car swept through the Park, pierced downtown traffic with a sharp thrust, and entered the narrow cañon of a side street.

A man in uniform opened the door. He had the traditional pink-and-blue countenance of the family servant, but something in his eyes belied his deprecating smile. He knew too much about Zarloff, perhaps.

He bowed and swung wide the door. Zarloff was flattered by this flourish of buttons and gold braid. As always, he descended briskly. This was the pageantry of success.

"Good evening, Roberts."

"Good evening, sir. A little snow."

Zarloff did not trouble to say whether or not there was snow. He waited for the elevator, his feet spread, conscious of being stared at. He had chosen an apartment building famous for its size and its professional habitués. Zarloff would not go unrecognized in the lobby of a building given over to actresses, pretty-girl artists, playwrights and motion-picture directors. He was the god of opportunity. A look, a word from Zarloff might change the very face of destiny.

This gilded lobby corresponded exactly to his boyish conception of beauty. Here was the palace of his dreams, concrete, realized: palms; thick rugs; marble; bronze; uniformed lackeys; and a subdued whisper of women. "That's Zarloff. Star Pictures. Owns the sixteenth floor."

The sixteenth floor was Zarloff's. From this peak, like a god on Parnassus, he could gaze at New York and justifiably call it his own. He had conquered this city of toppling towers, this grinding monster crouched in the waters. From a tintype peddler catching pennies

in Hester Street to walnut-lined offices in Fifth Avenue—the traverse had been colossal. At fifty he straddled Manhattan.

"Saxe!"

Dolly was waiting for him. She ran, in the manner of her kind, to meet him, her narrow heels tapping from rug to rug with a staccato tempo calculated to register impatience. This ritual Zarloff expected. All the women he had known were given to running from chair to chair, from room to room, like ecstatic poodles in pursuit of a bonbon.

"Oh, what a wonderful, soft, purry coat, Saxe! Um! Yum! Isn't it *too* lovely? Glad to see me?"

He smiled.

"Always glad, Dolly."

"I've been so lonely, all by my little self in this great, big room."

He pinched her cheek. His smile was enigmatic, the guarded, selfish smile of a Bedouin. Women, he thought, were attracted by indifference. The secret of his success lay in his ability to feel nothing below the surface emotions. Like a cat, he enjoyed being stroked, but it cost him no twinge of conscience to walk away once he had had enough.

He had progressed from the inception of his career, aesthetically, beyond the self-evident beauty of blond curls and classic profiles to the more piquant, the stranger loveliness of girls like Dolly.

She wore her black hair short, banded, cut straight around like a Japanese doll-baby. Her eyes were indicative of a casual racial sprinkling—her grandmothers had been Chinese and Italian, her grandfathers Slavic and Irish. She had no morals to speak of, only a curious code of the streets, a rigid context beyond the comprehension of the gentle.

Zarloff was her triumph. Her child dreams had always included a fairy prince who was rich and magnanimous, and who would love her for at least five years.

She wore peach-satin trousers and a purple coat embroidered in magenta and gold. As Zarloff held her in the crook of his arm he glanced down, and his look was struck aside by the hard brilliance of her eyes; they were like agates in satin cases.

"I'm going out to dinner," he said briefly.

"Oh, Saxe!"

For the first time an expression flashed across her eyes. He could read her fear.

"Not here for dinner with Dolly? You promised!"

He put her aside and, sensing the conflict, went to the window. His resistance was doubled by that great electric sign, still visible over the house tops: "Zarloff. Star Pictures. Zarloff."

"Where are you going?" Dolly asked. Then in a violent voice: "With Rose Hara!"

He shook his head.

"Why, then? You might answer!"

He shrugged his shoulders. All the women he had ever known had been jealous, and all of them had measured love with the wrong yardstick.

This woman was not in love with him; never had been. He had, he supposed, missed what they call the real thing—unique possession. Dolly Fox wore her scandals as some women wear sequins.

A sharp pain possessed his heart for a moment. It was, he discovered, hate. He hated Dolly; hated her sharp, greedy face staring up at him; hated her fingers, polished, pointed, digging into his arm.

She attempted one of her seductive smiles, and he saw without emotion her perfect teeth, two matched rows set in pink gums. Her teeth had attracted him before he had considered her intelligence. He had made her famous on the silver sheet, not out of deference to her wit or her humanity, but because she had a dazzling smile. He had em-

ployed skilled directors, camera men and technical experts, to "put her over."

"Dolly Fox" leaped to the incandescents together with "Zarloff, Star Pictures," and their names blazed side by side.

There had been, some maintained, a marriage ceremony somewhere in the past. But there had been also, some others maintained, a husband who antedated Zarloff. And the vital statistics were not deeply inquired into by the principles. At all events, the affair had lasted, Zarloff's associates said, rather longer than might have been expected, long enough to establish in Dolly a conviction of ownership. "Finding is keeping" had been revamped to: "Keeping is having." The peculiar, spiritual Broadway sleight-of-hand had sanctified Dolly Fox's right to Zarloff. This is not *holy* matrimony, but it is a crooked equivalent. Granted that morality is a matter of latitude and longitude, it is not beyond reason that even a crooked code may be a workable code—on Broadway.

Dolly wore the smile of the fortunate chatelaine. She rode in Zarloff's car. She entertained Zarloff's friends. She forged chains with which to shackle Zarloff's imagination. He was hers. He would be, must be, hers!

Zarloff unhooked her fingers and went into his bedroom to change into evening clothes. He was not yet accustomed, although thoroughly broken into, the formalities. He dressed carefully, staring at himself in a triple mirror surmounting an elaborate table.

Zarloff's bedroom was an affair of velvet and satin, Napoleonic furniture, crystal and yellow marble—the boudoir of a French courtesan or a woman of the expensive American bourgeoisie. Created by a decorator, it had about it the impermanence of a stage setting.

The peasant, Zarloff, was unaware of any incongruity. He brushed his hair with gold-mouthed brushes, meeting his reflection with satisfaction.

He found Dolly curled upon a cushion like a sulky little cat.

"You're really going?"

"Yes."

She lifted her head and let him see the slow fall of two perfect, crystal tears, tears that traced paths across the expert make-up. And he reflected that, after all, his directors had succeeded in teaching her something—she could cry!

He was sick to death of her little nervous wriggings, her smile, the thrusting forward of her head, like a voiceless swan reaching for crumbs. Yet he postponed telling her so.

"Good night," he said.

She sat up.

"All right. I'll phone Bent. He'll take me to the Palais Royal. He'll be glad to!"

"Phone him," Zarloff said, "by all means."

"I hate you!"

He closed the door.

Why lose his temper? This had happened before. It always happened. He had discovered the sources of women's flattery. He had made Dolly a star, and she hated him as vehemently, as easily, as ruthlessly, as she hated more sacred things.

Mrs. Gilbert Lynn lived in the discreet Sixties—east. She was anchored well to windward of business shoals, and her brick house stood between two vast, marble palaces with grilled windows and Strozzi lanterns. By its simplicity the Lynn house achieved a sort of aloofness.

The shadowy hallway surprised Zarloff, and as he gave his things to a servant he saw through the parted curtains into the drawing-room.

He had never seen a room that looked, as he put it mentally, "accustomed." Left alone for a moment, he experienced a shock of pleasure, a feeling that he had been challenged by a subtle and discriminating woman. The thought excited him. He passed his tongue over

his lips and folded his hands behind his back, awaiting the encounter.

He had never failed.

The curtains parted again and Mrs. Gilbert Lynn came toward him. He smiled as if she had caught him whistling to keep his courage up.

"Mr. Zarloff."

"Mrs. Lynn."

She was a tall woman with something reckless in the carriage of her head, and eyes that looked at him sideways from under thick, dark lashes.

Now he remembered having seen her, and where. She had been one of a party of bankers and their friends who had "toured" his Long Island studios. Zarloff had guided them out of deference to their millions.

This woman had said very little. He recalled the outlines—her awkward gestures, her throaty voice, that oblique glance—nothing more.

"You probably don't remember me," she said.

"I do. Yes."

"There were so many of us, and only one of you." She smiled. "I was very much impressed by what I saw. I had no idea that the machinery is so complex. The results scarcely justify—"

"You don't like the pictures, Mrs. Lynn?"

"No. Do you?"

Zarloff straightened.

"Well—"

"You do! I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Why? It's a great business. I've made a fortune in the movies, Mrs. Lynn."

"But—"

"I know what you're going to say. We're putting art into the pictures—slowly. It's a new industry. Give us time."

She moved forward a step and he forgot his antagonism in an amazed recognition of her beauty. He had been for a moment disarmed, but now that he found her possessed of that inexpensive

commodity he was at his ease again. A beautiful woman, Zarloff thought, was the least of earth's mysteries.

A servant announced dinner. They were to be alone, then.

Her dining room was as satisfactory as her drawing-room; it had the same air of permanence and security. Gray walls, a white mantel, windows that opened, apparently, upon a balcony.

Zarloff felt a vague discontent. He saw at one glance that his own apartment lacked this quality of "rightness." His decorator had cheated him.

The table was set with strips of maroon brocade, bowls and candlesticks of purple glass, and frosty old silver.

Mrs. Lynn was silhouetted against a ruddy firelight. Zarloff had never seen finer shoulders. Magnificent shoulders! She would make Dolly look like a ridiculous little bag of bones.

Mrs. Lynn made him feel, somehow, that the systems had been reversed; she was the constellation, he the satellite.

And a curious idea took possession of his mind, persisted, seemed to float up from the void of their polite conversation, or tower above him, tall and pointed, like a tree with its tip in the stars.

Suppose he were to fall in love with her?

He watched her. She neither wriggled nor ran; her eyes were impersonal but capable of kindness. If he had known women like this one— He felt a pang of envy. He was sorry for himself. He had spent half a million for a thing that can't be bought.

He couldn't make her out. Why had she asked him to dine alone with her in this shadowed and faintly perfumed intimacy? Either she was deep, or she had something to gain.

He found himself telling her the story of Zarloff; how he had come through that gate in Russia with a lust for money.

Mrs. Lynn seemed to be holding his narrative between her fingers as it spun from his lips, and whenever there was a fault in it she pounced, as if she had discovered a broken stitch.

"I wanted power," he told her; "nothing less than czardom. Impossible in Russia then; not so impossible to-day."

"Just as impossible," she interrupted.

"What do you mean?"

"Russia has had enough of czars. But go on. You became a czar, after all. I saw you on your throne."

He leaned forward, flushing.

"I stepped from the Ghetto to Fifth Avenue in twenty-five years."

"Luck. Faith in your star."

"Ambition," he corrected. "I wanted what I got."

"Oh, did you? That's interesting. Now that you've got what you've got, you're satisfied?"

"I can't have what *you've* got," Zarloff said sharply.

"I?"

"This house; your manners; your superiority. You inherited the very things that make you contemptuous of me. I had to fight for my possessions, and I'm proud of them."

"What are they?"

He enumerated, counting on his short, blunt fingers:

"Money; power over people; Zarloff in electric lights; comfort; pleasure."

"Nothing else?"

"What else is there?"

She gave him a curious look.

"There is love. At least— Perhaps I am wrong. I may have been badly instructed. I grew up with ideas about life—"

The servant hovered, offering a silver dish heaped with grapes, frosty, purple. Mrs. Lynn's voice trailed off. She seemed to have forgotten that they were treading on the thin ice of mutual confession. Dolly Fox would have seen to it that the ice gave way.

Later, in the drawing-room, Mrs.

Lynn took up the thread where it had broken off.

"I had curious ideas about life. I was brought up to believe in the homely moralities; to tell the truth; to wash my face and hands; to be decent; to be brave; and to hold my tongue. I was never told that some day some one would love me. But I believed it." I gathered beauty to offer him: sunsets; songs; how to ride a horse and how to play polo; emotions and tastes and enthusiasms. I was a storehouse, but, perhaps, not a treasure house. It's so hard to say." She glanced up. "Funny that I should be telling you this. I never told 'Tabby' Lynn."

"Tabby Lynn!"

"Now you know why I asked you here."

Zarloff gasped.

"Of course."

Her eyes were wide open. They seemed to draw his heart out of his body. He was ashamed, but it did not occur to him to be sorry for her.

Of course. He remembered now. Dolly Fox and that stupid young society man, Tabby Lynn, of course. Dead. Sprawled on Dolly's satinwood bed, with a bullet through his heart. Six years ago when Dolly Fox was a bit of black-and-white thistledown drifting across the vaudeville stage—

They had sent for Zarloff because he was even then "making" Dolly Fox, shaping her into a pliant satellite.

He remembered her, crumpled, her hair in little wet ringlets like the curls of Medusa.

"I didn't do it, Saxe. This fellow's a fool. He was crazy about me. He's a swell. He's got a wife. And he's killed himself. Damn fool! Oh, Saxe, take me out! I'm scared! I'm scared!"

Zarloff had said:

"It will cost me ten thousand to shut them up."

"I'm worth it," Dolly Fox had answered. "Aren't I?"

Zarloff came back to Mrs. Lynn's eyes.

"Yes," he said stiffly, "I see why you asked me here."

"Not to question you," she assured him. "Tabby is dead, and a whole lifetime of feelings died with him. I don't know how to begin again or what I must think or be. I'm—well, canceled. Because I loved Tabby."

She made one of her awkward gestures.

"I want, simply, to understand him. What it was that caught Tabby and squeezed him to death."

"I can't help you," Zarloff said.

"You can! He blundered into something—a pit, a darkness, a dazzling light." She broke off. "You saw him, didn't you?"

Zarloff said:

"Yes." Then, recollecting, corrected himself; "No."

"You saw him dead. You should have seen him alive! He was the most thoughtless, the most lovable creature in the world. Warm and rollicking like a puppy, gay and beautiful." She spread out her hands. "I placed all my little bouquets at his feet the day I met him."

Zarloff wasn't listening. What did it matter what she said? Her foolish young husband had been caught in a stream and whirled away like a water bug in a mill race because he didn't know better than to fall in; because men are as helpless as water bugs, to begin with; because the stream of life is dark and swift, terrible. Did she hold him responsible? Nonsense! He had had nothing to do with Tabby Lynn's dissipation, or with Dolly Fox, for that matter. Live and let live. People risked their necks and their souls climbing to success. Only the strong and the pitiless survived as he had survived. He was secure in his achievement; success was better than a substitute for absolution.

Mrs. Lynn's voice again:

"I lost him. He trampled on my heart to get to that other." Her eyes were wide and dark, drawing Zarloff's heart out of his body. "What is she like?" she asked in a whisper.

"You mean—Dolly?"

Mrs. Lynn nodded.

After a moment, Zarloff said in a sulky voice:

"She's a woman. I don't know."

"Is she beautiful?"

"No."

"Is she clever?"

"No."

"Then why in Heaven's name—"

"If I could answer, Mrs. Lynn, I would. A woman like you, and a woman like Dolly Fox— She isn't even intelligent. She can't spell cat. She sleeps all day and comes to life at five o'clock in the afternoon. She's cruel to her dog. She hasn't an emotion that isn't backhanded. There she is, and here you are."

"Tabby loved her."

Zarloff did not answer and Mrs. Lynn rose suddenly.

"Then *this* doesn't count! He liked her sort of house, her sort of talk, her sort of clothes. Oh, no! No! I can't make myself into that!"

"You needn't," Zarloff said. "I like what you are."

She stood still. Her breath seemed to stop. Her hands fell to her sides.

"I like what you are," Zarloff repeated. "Your husband didn't. There he is, and here I am. Does this prove anything to you?"

Her eyes went sideways with that dark, deep, fascinating look.

"I loved Tabby," she said. "I don't love you."

Then, with the sureness of his kind: "You might."

Their glances met. Zarloff caught his breath. The challenge was mutual, magnificent, preposterous.

"You might. I want what you gave him."

"I am very humble," she said quickly. "My flowers are withered. I can't remember my sunsets. And I sing out of tune."

"You might. If I came ready."

Zarloff rose, too. His intention had crystallized.

He saw himself passing through the gate of his father's house, carrying the heavy cloth bags his mother had made for him, and wearing one of his grandfather's coats with vast skirts and patches. His eyes were fixed on that horizon picketed with skyscrapers. His breath was frosty and a spray of stars slipped down the sky.

"Good night," he said abruptly.

He felt the reassuring clasp of her hand; her eyes were steady, but there was a sweet, a delicious trembling of her lips.

"You have been very kind."

A servant opened the door and Zarloff hurried across the pavement to his limousine. The driver had been asleep, not expecting Zarloff at nine-thirty. He sprang awake and to the wheel at the same instant, his face coming alive all over, with a look of crafty subservience in his eyes.

"Sorry, sir. Home, sir?"

"Home," Zarloff said with wry emphasis.

What had come over him? What had he said to that woman? In some mysterious way he had promised himself, had dedicated his future to her. But he had not offered her the present.

Some one passing in a taxicab said: "Did you see? Zarloff! Star Pictures! He must have met with a ghost."

The Park again. Cold, asphalt paths, dusted with snow, cutting squares out of the shrubbery. Electric bulbs like moon bubbles set upon sticks.

"Zarloff. Star Pictures. Zarloff. Star Pictures."

A confused flow of images passed before his eyes. What it was that had caught Tabby Lynn and squeezed him

to death. A room, diagonal, canopied. Artificial moonlight and the tom-tom and braying of a jazz orchestra. Mirrors. A crowd of men and women clasped in each other's arms. Another crowd, ghostly, speechless, with bright eyes, moving in the mirrors. Flashes of color in a woman's dress. Ankles and feet clad in silk. Hands with fingers outspread. A look, surprised, springing to the surface from the depths of primal emotion.

Or again: His studio. Himself lying on a sofa. Some one at the piano, playing that modern stuff, a sort of slithering and squeaking. A woman laughing, as if there were no music. And a white arm gliding over his own; fingers groping for his hand. "Saxe. Sweet old boy. Look at me."

Dolly was asleep. He opened the door of his apartment and closed it violently behind him, but she did not stir or open her eyes. A phonograph record spun "Tahiti" in a corner. On the table behind Dolly a row of empty glasses and a cocktail shaker. Dolly had not been alone. Or perhaps she had. She was an expert in those little games of deception. Suspicion was a potent ally.

Zarloff stopped the record and "Tahiti" squeaked into oblivion. The sudden and unusual silence wakened Dolly; her polished eyes stared at Zarloff, unwinking, expressionless.

"Home?" she said.

She stretched, thrusting her pink palms upward with the gesture of an Egyptian.

"Dolly's been asleep. So lonely."

Zarloff sat down, facing her.

"See here," he said. "We're going to quit all this. You've cheated me. I haven't had what I expected, or what I deserved. Not from you or any woman. I mean what I say."

"Quit?"

"Yes, you're going out of my life—for good. I know it when I see a

counterfeit coin or a forged check. You're fake. You're bogus."

She laughed.

"You're fooling."

"I've never been more serious."

"Say, don't tell me you've got religion. You!"

"Not religion; something like it."

Her voice broke; a rasp came into it.

"Love, then."

"No—sight."

"You're crazy."

"Maybe. What have I given you? Half a million, at least. And your name up there beside mine in letters six feet high! What have you given me? You come running when I whistle. And you hate me."

"I don't! I'm crazy about you." She sat up with one of her quick, wriggling motions, a sort of shiver of arms and shoulders, a fluttering of her hands. "I'm crazy about you, Saxe."

Zarloff's resentment mounted within him like a tide. His eyes, newly instructed, judged the appalling luxury of this room; velvet curtains, mediocre rugs, department-store antiques; an expensive and atrocious imitation, all of it! It maddened him that he had gone so far in fatuous acceptance of the spurious. Damn fool! Damn fool! Blind idiot, to have seen only the first horizon. Now he paused, disillusioned, and strained to see beyond, to a second horizon. At fifty—

"Saxe. Listen to your Dolly. I didn't mean what I said. Honest."

He put her aside with a gesture the more violent because it was unconscious. And a spasm of feeling twisted her face beyond recognition; she was a crouching fury, pallid, terrified. Very deliberately he went about the room, jerking down portières, hangings, draperies, overturning Jersey City Ming gods and goddesses, scattering books and magazines, the signed photographs of blond women, lamps, vases, clocks. He ripped and tore with a deliberate, unhurried,

thoughtful intention. A heap of draperies covered the floor and he waded through the debris of his expensive illusions.

"What are you doing? You fool! I'll call the police! You're crazy."

"Call them."

With a simple and comprehensive gesture, he ripped the telephone out of the wall, and a puff of plaster, like smoke, drifted up, exploded, vanished.

"Now you," he said. "I begin again. Clear."

"What do you mean?"

She came toward him, scuffling in her brilliant little Chinese slippers, bent forward as if she meant to spring at him.

"You can't! You *daren't!*"

Zarloff said quietly:

"I dare." And he added, in an impartial and almost expressionless voice: "I've had enough of what I thought I wanted. It's never too late to start over. Tabby Lynn shot himself and hurt her, hurt her like hell. And a lot you cared. You little false diamond. You fake actress. You imitation woman. Hurt her. I'll have to go back and start again, clear. Out of that gate. With stars—"

"You *are* crazy."

Dolly gave him a look that had in it a shrewd appraisal. He stood with his feet planted well apart, both hands clutching the fallen draperies and hanging heavily at his sides, his head lowered, his face flushed a dark red as if he were on fire with fever. The fight had gone out of him. He was Samson brought down by the pillars of the temple; Samson shorn.

"Very well," she said suddenly, in a crisp and clipped voice. "I'll go. You're finished."

And with a wriggle of her shoulders, she ran from rug to rug toward her room, leaving Zarloff, with bent head and blank eyes, standing in the wreckage.

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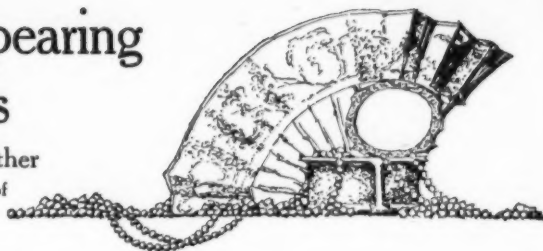
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The Disappearing Pearls

By Rice Gaither

Author of "The Pardoning of
Beliard,"
"Flight," etc.



YOU remember the last strange disappearance of the Vanderlyn pearls. The papers had quite a thrilling story of the robbery, and they talked about the case for weeks. But, as I am reminded, the mystery—and there was a mystery—never was cleared up. All we know absolutely is that the pearls, of inestimable value, were stolen from the fair throat of Miss Maisie Dillard, known to Broadway as the little peach in "Peaches," while she slept, well past midnight, in the drawing-room of the Vanderlyn apartment, which, as every one knows, looks out upon Washington Square.

I want to emphasize the fact that I absolutely don't know who got the pearls. It is true that I was, and am, on intimate terms with Mr. Archibald Vanderlyn, heir to the Vanderlyn millions; that I am married to the lady to whom Mr. Vanderlyn was erroneously reported to be engaged at the time of the disappearance; and that, moreover, I was in the Vanderlyn apartment on the very night the pearls so strangely vanished. All this has caused me some embarrassment. But, absolutely, I do not know who got the pearls.

You will recall that it was Mr. Archibald Vanderlyn, himself, who reported to the police that the Vanderlyn pearls had been stolen. The police understood him to say that a burglar had come up the dumb-waiter, made his haul, and escaped in the same manner, although Mr. Vanderlyn had, for a time, had the drop

on the burglar. The police expected Mr. Vanderlyn to come around to headquarters and tell them all about it. But he didn't. That afternoon it became noised abroad that Mr. Vanderlyn, himself, had disappeared. Certainly he was not at home, for I looked for him there, and also peeped through the grated window of his garage, to see whether he had taken his gray roadster. He hadn't.

The case became further imbued with mystery, as the papers said, when, during the afternoon, appeared a statement from Miss Dillard, saying that the burglar hadn't got the Vanderlyn pearls at all, but that the ghost had got them—you know, the Vanderlyn ghost that was said twice before to have stolen the pearls. Whereupon Mr. Wimbleton, hereditary attorney for the Vanderlyns, and the father of the young woman—now my wife—to whom Mr. Archibald Vanderlyn was said to have been engaged, issued a statement, in which he strongly intimated that he believed in neither ghost nor burglar, and proposed to have Miss Dillard, herself, arrested. Perhaps he would have carried out his threat, but for the fact that the police picked up an erstwhile resident of Sing Sing, and on his person found a watch identified as Mr. Archie Vanderlyn's, and a ring Miss Dillard had been wearing.

"Yes, I robbed the Vanderlyn house last night," the burglar said defiantly. "Rather, I meant to rob it. But I ain't seen the pearls. As for these"—he in-

licated watch and ring—"Mr. Vanderlyn, himself, insisted that I take them."

Then, hardly was the ink dry on this absurdity, when extras issued, headed: "Mr. Vanderlyn weds Maisie."

It was true.

Really, all anybody knew was that the whole thing was queer, although it looked as if it were going to turn out just a simple case of robbery. The Sing Sing person, confessedly and circumstantially a burglar, went on trial. The fruits of his raid on the Vanderlyn apartment the night the necklace disappeared had been found on his person. And yet the case was dropped before it ever got to the jury, and the whole issue became involved in talk about ghosts—yes, seriously—metered miles of talk, and unmeasured columns of news print.

What did emerge in clear outlines, however, was the fact that this was the third disappearance of the Vanderlyn pearls in three generations. Twice before the moment, of which I shall tell, when the pearls were stealthily removed from sleeping Maisie's delicately powdered neck, they had vanished quite mysteriously, and were as mysteriously returned. That is according to the almost mythical tradition that concerns them. But such gaps of time there were between the thefts, such glamour surrounds them, that it is quite difficult to say what were the facts and what the investitures. Was there a ghost, or wasn't there? And, if there wasn't a ghost, why didn't Archie go on and send Mr. Sikes to Sing Sing again, where Mr. Sikes, anyway, so patently deserved to go?

The fact is—I can say so, now that the whole thing has blown over and settled down, as it were—the fact is that I was somewhat concerned in this pearl business, though I do protest that I had no idea what I was starting that afternoon when Archie came scowling into the club. Out of the corner of my eye

I saw him jab the hall man with his cane, and then throw himself into the chair next mine, demanding whisky.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" I asked.

He muttered: "Damn my Aunt Het," so viciously I didn't speak to him again till he had drunk his whisky—straight.

I said, then, quietly:

"What has your Aunt Het done to you?"

He stared at me out of glassy eyes and, after a moment, said less savagely, but with a melancholy indignation:

"Damn Mr. Wimbledon."

I knew then that it was money. Archie was all tied up, you know, his millions held in trust till he was thirty, or was married to a girl approved by Mr. Wimbledon.

"Yes, damn everybody," I agreed as soothingly as possible.

Then I picked up my paper and began to read. The case involved a string of pearls—a French case, quite absorbing. There had been a necklace in the Louvre, it seemed, that suffered from starvation, till the courts, consulting experts, ordered that the pearls be worn; and now, by contact with fair throats, the pearls were regaining their old lustre.

I told Archie.

"Haven't you some pearls?" I asked divertingly.

Archie snorted.

"Mr. Wimbledon's got everything," he said. "He's going to keep it till I'm thirty. Or," he added with unaccountable depression, "until I've married Gladys."

"And you don't want to marry Gladys?"

"No. Of course not. Maisie's who I want to marry."

Fancy his not wanting Gladys! But it warmed my heart to hear. If Archie didn't want to marry Gladys, why, then, I—I wanted him to marry Maisie, even though I couldn't understand.

"How old are you, old man?" I asked.

"I'm only twenty-eight," he answered. "Why do you suppose my father tied me up till I am thirty?"

"I don't know. Unless your father thought you'd reach discretion late in life."

I didn't mean to put it like that. But he didn't seem to notice. He put his glass down on the floor and kicked it. Then he fell to silent brooding, while I resumed the story of the pearls.

It was while I sat there that the idea came to me that Archie's pearls were withering. I knew they were shut up in a box somewhere, and must be slowly starving for the human touch.

It wasn't really my affair, you'll say, but in that moment came the feeling that I owed something to my friend. How could I perform a service in appreciation of his not wanting Gladys? How more suitably than by saving his ancestral pearls for the woman he should choose when he had reached discretion?

I went at once to Mr. Wimbledon, in the suite, in lower Broadway, of Messrs. Wimbledon, Fox, Clarty & Wimbledon. It gave me a thrill, as I passed through the counting room, to think what my relations might be one day with the head and power of this firm, which, pending Archie's attainment of discretion, was administering for him his corporeal and incorporeal hereditaments.

Awe almost overcame me as I found the door marked "Mr. Wimbledon," and "Very Private." I might have turned back, if the door hadn't been slightly open, and had I not seen the senior member's feet come off his desk.

"Well, what are you doing in a business office?" said Mr. Wimbledon not very cordially, as I went in.

I told him as briefly as I could, and he listened with a rather unpleasant expression on his face.

"Did you come here to jest?" he asked when I had finished.

"The courts——" I began.

"Oh, did you say the courts?"

He seized my newspaper eagerly, read carefully the article indicated, then ordered books and legal journals brought to him.

"You're right," he said at last, and pressed a gold button at the edge of his desk, whereupon appeared Mr. Clarty, a gentleman who certainly would have responded to the ring of no base metal. "Clarty," said Mr. Wimbledon, "how long has it been since the Vanderlyn pearls were worn?"

Mr. Clarty, who seemed to have important facts at the tip of his tongue, replied that the late Mrs. Vanderlyn had worn the pearls at the Sellers' ball in 1904.

"That was January third," particularized Mr. Clarty. "Which would mean that the time elapsed is eighteen years, one month and three days."

"Very good," said Mr. Wimbledon, who then pressed a nickel button.

A stenographer came in and took down a document. Perhaps it was a brief, perhaps not. But I noticed that it was backed up with pale-blue paper of good, thick texture, and learned the next day that the court had immediately issued an order, directing that the pearls be taken from their vault and worn next to a lady's skin.

I read it in the papers. I was surprised to see how much they made of it. One of them wanted to know who was going to wear the pearls. "Will it be Miss Mehitabel Vanderlyn, aunt of the young heir?" I remember it asked rhetorically. "Or, rather, will it be the next Mrs. Vanderlyn, who, some people say, is none other than Miss Gladys Wimbledon, the favored daughter of the trustee?"

Another paper saw another fate for the pearls. "Society is wondering," this paper said, "if the pearls will disappear again. They do vanish strangely each generation, only to be quietly and mysteriously returned. Does a ghost

steal them, as old rumor hath it? And, if the thief is a ghost, will he come back again, now that the Vanderlyns' old mansion has been turned into apartments? Can a ghost live in a New York apartment house?"

Absurd as I then thought it, I read about the former thievings of the pearls. "A cruel ghost," I thought, "to choose such times for his nefarious operations. Both times, the Vanderlyns in their direst need."

First it was in 1856. The Vanderlyns were in clippers then. One by one their ships went down—one in a storm off the Canaries; one aground on the northern, rocky coast of France; a third rounding the Horn from San Francisco. The series of disasters, rivaling that which befell Signor Antonio, was thought to be the ultimate in calamity, until it became known along the Rialto of New York that the Vanderlyns' great house in the vicinity of Washington Square contained a ghost, and that the ghost, in this hour of family need, had spirited away the rope of pearls. And then in 1893, when Archie's father wanted to get hold of a railroad, which meant the difference between success and bankruptcy, along came the ghost again. The pearls mysteriously disappeared.

"It looks," the paper said, "as if the ghost always came when the Vanderlyns were in a hole. The fortunes of the Vanderlyns were never higher than they are to-day. The old mansion that housed the ghost has been supplanted by the Vanderlyn apartments. Yet there are those who predict that the ghost of practical and sardonic jokes will not, if he survives the demolition of his ancient home, permit the jewels to remain much longer unmolested."

Laugh as you will, this troubled me. Of course I didn't yet believe in ghosts—certainly not as late as 1893. But wasn't that foreboding? I had immediate misgivings. Suppose something did

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happen to the Vanderlyn pearls! Mightn't I be blamed for having them removed from the comparative safety of a bank vault to the mysterious—if still incredible—danger of the Vanderlyn apartments?

I went immediately to the Vanderlyn apartments. Something about the building reassured me. There, on either side of it, were houses that were capable of entertaining ghosts. But not the Vanderlyn apartments! Built, so far as possible, of the ancient brick and mortar that had gone into the mansion of the 1840s, it was yet a modern dwelling. There were terra-cotta tile floors, elevators, gold push buttons, and inhabitants who wouldn't have put up with ghosts.

But hardly had my confidence come back in this direction, when Miss Mehitabel inspired me with another fear.

She was seated in an overstuffed chair in the foyer of her own apartment, talking to Mr. Wimbledon, who stood before her, as Parsons let me in.

"Bob"—she nodded to me carelessly—"I believe even you would have known better than to bring these here, after advertising to all the crooks in the underworld that they could be had for the stealing."

Believe it or not, a cold perspiration, like that the story chaps tell of, sprang to my forehead. Miss Mehitabel, with the greasy little silken bag that I knew held the Vanderlyn pearls, looked coldly from me to Mr. Wimbledon. I hadn't thought of crooks. But now, after—"You certainly do not mean to imply that I went to the papers," Mr. Wimbledon dared hope.

"The whole idea is absurd," affirmed Miss Mehitabel. "I wonder how you had the imagination." Mr. Wimbledon looked in my direction. "Ha!" laughed Miss Mehitabel. "I suppose you want me to wear them around my fair throat. Or, perhaps, you think they would look nice on Gladys."

"You have always shown the utmost disregard for science, Mehitabel," said Mr. Wimbledon, turning very red. "I happen to have studied pearls. The court sustains my view."

"More fool the court," Miss Mehitabel flung after him. "But come to dinner Sunday, anyway. Bring Gladys." She turned to me then. "Bob," she said, when Mr. Wimbledon was gone, "do you think Archie should marry Gladys?"

"Ah, no," I answered from the heart.

"Nor I," said Miss Mehitabel. "He ought to marry into a family with sense."

I sat there, pondering her words, till Archie came. I knew that he had been up to the matinee that Maisie played in. But I didn't know Aunt Het knew. She surprised me.

"Archie," said Aunt Het, "I want to know about this girl."

"In love with her," said Archie.

"Pretty?"

"Say, I'd like to show her to you."

"Well, let's see her."

"Shall we go to-night?"

"Why not to-night?"

I didn't go with them, but Archie told me. They sat where Archie always sat—he regularly held two seats—and watched the show.

At first Aunt Het was not enthusiastic.

"Doesn't this bore you?" she asked when Maisie spoke her line in the middle of the third act.

But rolling down Fifth Avenue in the Vanderlyn limousine, Aunt Het exhibited a real interest in Maisie.

"The girl's respectable, I suppose," she said, which angered Archie. Then, being reassured on that point, she asked: "Is there a Sunday evening performance?"

"There isn't," answered Archie.

"Well," Aunt Het said, laughing queerly, "bring her down to dinner Sunday. I'd like her to meet the Wimbledon's."

I thought it very queer when Archie told me. Why did Aunt Het want Maisie to meet the Wimbledon's—or was it vice versa? But, anyway, it seemed to me a queer mixing of the classes.

"You'd better come, also," said Archie. "I suppose we might say you'd make it six."

From the very first, I say, I didn't like the idea of the dinner party. True, I had no idea what was coming. But I had misgivings. Suppose Archie, seeing Gladys and Maisie side by side, should change his silly mind about not wanting Gladys? I suppose that must have been the extent of my forebodings, because, certainly, I thought Aunt Het would have put away the pearls for safety. Still, there was much talk of them in the papers, and now, as I look back clearly instead of forward dimly, I can see just what was happening.

I wish I could show this thing as they would do it in the movies. First I'd show you Archie putting Maisie in a taxi after the show Saturday night, and buying for her, as he left her, a copy of her favorite newspaper, which folds conveniently and is profusely illustrated. Then I'd show you Maisie at breakfast in her little apartment the next morning, Maisie looking very fresh and beautiful, unfolding her paper over grapefruit and eggs and toast. I'd show you the story of the Vanderlyn pearls, done for the magazine.

And then I'd show you Mr. Sikes.

You've never heard of Mr. Sikes, you say? Oh, yes, you have. In the first place, you have read your Dickens. In the second, I have mentioned Mr. Sikes hereinbefore. He is the erstwhile resident of Sing Sing, on whose person afterward were found the watch and ring. He dwells in the vicinity of Brooklyn bridge. We see him, looking very wicked and disgusting in the dive he frequents, lurch into a chair beside a table on the sawdust floor, draw a

copy of a paper toward him—the same paper Maisie reads.

"Ghost, huh?" he laughs unpleasantly, pulling his cap further down over his eyes, thrusting forth his heavy under-jaw, and, with a silk handkerchief, polishing up the lens of his pocket flashlight.

That as a sort of prologue, don't you know. The real drama opens at the Vanderlyn apartment Sunday evening.

I got there first. It was raining, I remember, one of those mean, February rains. Archie was pacing up and down the long drawing-room, smoking cigarettes and dropping ashes on the floor. He seemed very nervous. He was glum. He hardly spoke to me.

"What's gnawing on you, Archie?" I asked him when I could stand no longer seeing him kicking the rugs in silence.

"I want her to come, old man," he answered, "but I hate for her to have to come up against Aunt Het."

Aunt Het, however, beamed on Maisie.

"Good show," said Aunt Het when the little peach in "Peaches" came.

And Maisie beamed:

"Oh, do you think so?"

Archie came up with a bound.

"You're looking lovely, kid," he said to Maisie.

It was the Wimbledons, as Maisie put it afterward, who were up stage from the first. But I want to say for the Wimbledons, that I don't think they meant—at first—to be as distant as they seemed to be. In the first place, the Wimbledon nose is quite deceptive. Of course, they were surprised to see Maisie in the house. All their training has been away from light musical shows. And they were chagrined when Maisie, later, put the necklace on. And—this seemed to me to be their whole justification—Aunt Het laughed.

They really looked incredulous when, upon their arrival, Archie rushed for-

ward and explained that Maisie was in "Peaches."

"How very interesting," said Gladys; while Mr. Wimbledon's comment was: "Ah," and, after a moment: "Indeed."

Being of an old family, myself, and not having Archie's democratic impulses, I can thoroughly appreciate the way they felt. Though I will say that Maisie made no mistake about her artichokes, as vulgar persons are said sometimes to do, and that she took things over her shoulder from Parsons, quite as if she were used to it.

But the evening got a bad start. It was the pearls from the very first.

I am sure, because of my recollection of the conversation I had previously heard between Mr. Wimbledon and Miss Mehitabel, that it was not Mr. Wimbledon's intention to bring up the subject at all. He was talking about another matter entirely; indeed, about how, at the entrance to the apartment building that evening, he had met a most undesirable person.

"One never knows whom one will meet where, these days," said Mr. Wimbledon to Aunt Het, although, strangely enough, he looked at Maisie. "All the old lines are breaking down."

"Yes," agreed Aunt Het; "one goes to sleep in the Vanderlyn ancestral home, and wakes up—if one does wake up—in the Vanderlyn apartments."

Mr. Wimbledon was just remarking that there was a spirit about the old house, when Maisie broke in on him.

"Oh, Mr. Wimbledon," she said. "Do you really think there was a ghost?"

"Right-o," said Archie. "Can a ghost live in an apartment house?"

It made a situation, if you know what I mean. There was Mr. Wimbledon, intending no allusion to the ghost, anxious to escape a reference to the pearls, and here was this girl, unable to grasp his meaning, who construed his words into her own superstitions.

"No, of course not," Mr. Wimbledon replied indignantly.

"Really," Gladys said, controlling her emotions as she could.

"Oh, that reminds me," said Aunt Het. "Parsons, will you send a maid to bring that little silk bag off my dressing table?"

Mr. Wimbledon was properly alarmed.

"You don't mean to tell me, Mehitabel," he exclaimed, "that you keep those pearls on your dressing table!"

"The safest place is in the bank," Aunt Het came back at him, "but, since our lawyer thinks they should be worn—well, here they are. Thanks, Parsons." Then, to our utter astonishment, opening the greasy little bag, she handed the invaluable necklace across the table to Maisie. "Here, Maisie. Put these on. I guess they won't exactly shrivel up on you."

Maisie quite nonchalantly put out her hand, and with slender fingers snapped the diamond clasp securely about her neck.

"You know," she said, "I've been completely absorbed in reading about these pearls."

There was a silence then. I can't describe it, but it was terrible. It was Mr. Wimbledon's silence, if you know what I mean. And then he burst out:

"Don't you know these pearls might be stolen, Miss Mehitabel?"

"Or I might forget and wear them off," smiled Maisie, looking straight at Mr. Wimbledon. "Have you read about the fluid of forgetfulness in pearls?"

The situation even then might have been saved, but for the fact that Aunt Het laughed out loud. Then Mr. Wimbledon went mad. He shook his finger at the girl, who, he suspected, might be joshing him.

"I'll have no more of this," he said with so much asperity that Archie almost rose from his chair.

"That is the future Mrs. Vanderlyn," said Archie, very red.

"The very-distant-future Mrs. Vanderlyn?" said Mr. Wimbledon. "Or do you plan to go to work?"

You may imagine how deucedly uncomfortable it was, and how glad I felt when, dinner over, the Wimbledon's departed almost immediately. I turned indignantly toward Maisie, because I really felt that she was to blame, largely, for the contretemps; but, to my amazement, she stood beside the window, watching the February rain splash on the asphalt, and wiping her own tears with the film of her handkerchief.

Archie went and put his arm around her.

"Don't cry, dear," he said to her. Then, to Aunt Het: "Suppose I should marry Maisie to-morrow."

"Mr. Wimbledon would cut off your allowance," she replied.

"But I'd get everything when I am thirty," Archie argued.

"Yes. If you could live that long."

I saw Archie looking at the necklace. There it was, a million dollars, nearly. It was his. Potentially, it was a livelihood until the day when he should come into his other millions. But what irony! He couldn't get even the necklace. Mr. Wimbledon held it in trust, and I could see that Mr. Wimbledon would write another brief to-morrow, that should render null and void the brief, or what not, which had made it possible for him to take the pearls out of the bank. In other words, they would go back into the vault in the morning.

Then I saw Archie looking at the portraits of his father and his grandfather. Maisie's eyes followed his, too.

"You look just like your father," Maisie said.

"He always got what he wanted," Archie said indignantly.

"Yes, there was a spirit about the old house," Aunt Het quoted.

That was unfortunate, I thought. It made me think about the ghost. But,

then, I knew it was calculated to spur Archie to efforts of his own. Those other men, whose pictures hung in the Vanderlyn apartment, had had their struggles, too, and their privations. Think of the old grandfather who lost his clippers, and, when fortune never seemed so cruel, the pearls; and of the father, who bought the railroad, even after the returning ghost had, for a second time, deprived the family of its costliest possession. There was mettle in these men.

"I must go home," said Maisie.

"You can't go home in this storm," protested Aunt Het, looking out of the window. "I'll telephone your mother that you're staying with me."

I, too, stayed in the Vanderlyn apartment that night. But I can swear that not after the moment when we said good night did I lay eyes on the Vanderlyn pearls. I went to my room and to sleep, and when I woke up the pearls were gone, just as I have told you in the beginning. I read in the *Times* about the robbery.

But Maisie has since told me.

She was starting to undress—you can believe this or not, according as you believe in Maisie—when, looking into the oval mirror behind her dressing table, she saw herself in the necklace, whereupon she ran quickly back to the drawing-room, so that she might give it back to Aunt Het. To her surprise, the drawing-room was dark.

That meant that Parsons, too, had gone to bed. She didn't like to wake him, so she ran along the corridor to see if any one else was up. A door opened just a crack, and she thought she saw one panel of Archie, still in his dinner coat, silhouetted against the light inside the room. But the door closed instantly, and she went back into the drawing-room to consider.

It was warm in the drawing-room, and she was tired. She nestled in a great chair with soft cushions and a

high back. With her feet curled up under her, she looked about her for a moment, in the vague twilight, at the pictures of the Vanderlyns, staring down at her. She touched the necklace. Then she dozed.

The apartment was very quiet, she thought at first, as she came up out of sleep only to drop off again. Its silences vaguely troubled her. She missed the phonograph in the apartment across the way, and the people who moved about, even past midnight, in the apartment over her head. Here there was no sound, except the beating of the rain against the windows.

Her situation seemed scarcely real to her. She touched the necklace again. She dreamed she was in the old red-brick house, not the remodeled one in which she sat. She could see, outside, its granite trimmings and Corinthian doorway. The ancient Vanderlyns came in to her—lines of them in a long, mirrored room with walnut wainscoting and crystal chandeliers. Then suddenly she was in the room alone. A walnut panel opened, and some old Vanderlyn, who strangely looked like Archie, diaphanous and immaterial, came toward her through the gloom, crept stealthily toward her while she slept, and with deft fingers undid the diamond clasp of the necklace about her throat, and disappeared with it.

She was, in reality, awakened by a metallic click. A finger of light, searching about the room, touched fleetingly the pictures on the wall, a brass fire screen, a tall vase on the mantel.

It was Mr. Sikes. She knew it instantly, instantly comprehended why he had come now. Her first thought was: "He's too late to get the pearls. The ghost has beat him to them." It was just absurdly that. Then, wide awake, her thought was: "Well, he hasn't got them yet. He is yet standing in the door from the corridor."

Instinctively her hope of rescue

turned to Archie. Archie's room was out there on the corridor. Archie was behind the burglar, not so far away.

Should Maisie scream? That was her impulse, naturally. She must save the pearls which, but a moment before, she had felt about her neck. The burglar, evidently, had just entered the house, and yet paused upon the threshold of the drawing-room. It might cost her her life to scream, but, if she screamed, help would come before Mr. Sikes could snatch the pearls and run away with them.

She opened her lips to scream. She could feel long screams tugging at the chords of her throat. And yet no sound came. She screamed and screamed without ever faintly cracking the terrible silence of the house. She thought for a moment that she must still be asleep, having a nightmare.

Then she heard the voice. She knew it wasn't the burglar's voice, because it came from a point inside the room, a little to the left of where the burglar stood. Almost simultaneously the room lit.

"Stand perfectly still and make no noise," the voice was saying.

Then she saw Archie, where the voice had come from. He had one hand on the light switch, and the other clutched an automatic, which pointed at the burglar.

"Anything you wanted in particular, Mr. Sikes?" asked Archie.

"You know what I wanted," said the burglar sullenly.

The rest of Maisie's story I don't ask you to believe. But she says that Archie said:

"You're too late, old man. Another crook has beat you to 'em." Fancy that! And then: "Better keep the hands up, Mr. Sikes. Ask Maisie. She's been on the stage."

The next is most improbable of all, and yet, in a way, it corroborates the story of the burglar, after he was arrested.

Archie pulled out his watch and slipped it into the burglar's pocket. He took Maisie's ring and put it with the watch. He said:

"Accept these with my thanks, old man. This night you've done me a real service. Now, will you take the dumb-waiter down?"

That's all I know. Of course, I haven't really told you who got the necklace, or cleared up the ghost, or anything. But it's an honest tale. Perhaps I ought not to add that I went to Aunt Het soon after Archie's marriage to Maisie.

"Miss Mehitabel," I said, "do you suppose that Archie *might* have got that necklace himself?"

She laughed.

"Tush, child. You ought to marry one of the Wimbletons."

I did. But what did she mean by that?

BEAUTY specialists are constantly confronted with new problems, due to the increasing activities of women. A New York specialist comes forth with the announcement that automobile driving is causing women to become pigeon-toed. Many of her patrons turn the right foot in, the result of the unnatural position of the accelerator on their cars.

A NEW possibility and another use of the radio was disclosed recently when a couple off on their honeymoon, address unknown, was located at a secluded inn and a message delivered. Until recently "paging" of this sort was not even conceivable.



A Café in Cairo

By Izola Forrester

Author of "The White Moth,"
"The Temperamental Zone," etc

CHAPTER I.

THE second night of Barry Braxton's sojourn in Cairo he heard of the dead monk whom the daylight had disclosed in the garden of Achmed Zaradi.

Naida told him herself, violating the seal of secrecy which had been laid upon her most exquisite and voluble lips by Zaradi. After the last domino player had shuffled with dignity across the courtyard to the arched gateway in the high wall Barry had sat still at his special table in the corner, smoking and relaxing under the spell of the place.

Even in twenty-four hours one establishes a claim to a special table at Zaradi's. Bored and restless from months of waiting at Constantinople for the unwinding of official red tape, here he found himself contented, rested, in this perfumed, quiet, dimly lighted room, watching the Arab habitués, learning from them the virtue of patience.

Once every night the girl Naida danced, the hour before midnight. It was more like a ceremonial dance, part of some ancient ritual, than like the customary Oriental dance of abandon. He had noted her ivory coloring, vivid red lips, more delicately shaped than those of the other girl dancers along the Street of the Pomegranates.

Most of all, he had noted her strangely alluring eyes, amber brown, heavily lashed, oddly aloof and somber while she sat alone at the inlaid taboret

next to Zaradi's low Damascene table on the upper end of the long, narrow room. When she danced a thousand banked fires leaped to sudden life behind those lashes. Barry told himself that she was the spirit of New Egypt, an awakening sphinx whose power no man might gauge at the present hour.

It had been a lucky chance for him, this trip to Turkey. Three months before he had been appointed secretary to R. D. Drake, special commissioner on Near East affairs at Constantinople. When the need arose of immediate expedience in the dispatching of certain letters to Lord Raversham, Barry Braxton had been selected to meet him secretly in Cairo and receive his answer. Drake had notified him with his usual laconic and noncommunicative air.

"Raversham's been put in charge of the Pan-Islam inquiry. Changed his route at the last minute. Cutting out Constantinople; stopping at Cairo on his way to India. I was to have given him these personally on his arrival here. You do it in Cairo. Get his answer. That's all."

Within a few hours he had found himself in Cairo. It had given him his first real thrill in months. Constantinople was a disappointment. It seethed with the rising brew of postwar offpourings, a caldron that thought itself a crater, a potpourri of extravagances, a tawdry, bedizened slave woman who found herself suddenly the desired of the nations.

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Cairo dawned upon him in a beauty filled with mystery and suggestion. There are certain spots on earth that serve as magnets for the elements that make up romance and adventure. This was no painted courtesan auctioning her favors, but rather one of her own desert women, or one of those who dwelt behind the golden-screened windows, an age-old sorceress with silent, smiling lips, watching forever the shifting destinies of two worlds.

More secret diplomacy, he had been told by Drake and others of the group that waited developments at the Porte, had been consummated in Cairo's drowsy, colorful cafés than at state dinners or palace conferences. It mattered little what one's particular quest might be—the lure of power, or desire for adventure, the most priceless jewel in some royal mummy's after-life regalia, or the loveliest face behind any veil in Egypt—one sought out first the coffee house of Ahmed Zaradi. Possibly, if one lingered long enough and brought certain credentials, there would come a quiet hour before daybreak when Zaradi would take his chibouk from his lips and tell what one wished to know.

But, to his knowledge, Barry had brought no such credentials. He had no desire to traffic with men who dealt in concealed enigmas of strategy and intrigue. Drake had drawn him into the Eastern committee against his own inclinations. He faced responsibilities, being the only son of Prescott Braxton, the head of some of the largest banking interests in America. It was a good thing for him to get personal insight into the science of finance as it is played as the big game among the nations. He had welcomed the change and excitement of novelty, but details of diplomacy bored him, and Cairo had caught his fancy on the rebound.

Naida had seen him the moment he had entered the low, smoke-wreathed room from the arched doorway leading

across the garden. There were various deceptive features to Zaradi's dwelling. Seen from the narrow, winding Street of the Pomegranates, it was an ancient wine shop opening on the pavement, a place for idlers and domino players. But if one knew the way, one passed the two dark rooms through a narrow, stone passageway, emerging into the courtyard. Here again one found only the commonplace. But in the wall that bounded it was the low arched doorway, and beyond that another stone passageway, with steps that led ever upward until suddenly one emerged upon a terraced garden, open to the sky. Here one might sit and dream for hours undisturbed. Or stepping back under silken awnings, one became the guest of Zaradi in his private quarters. Here, for the initiate, Naida deigned to dance.

Barry, with Mantzon's directions as guide, had passed without query on his first visit through the archway, opened the low door of carved cypress, and found himself in the upper room of the café. Yellow lights gleamed through perforated copper lanterns. He had hesitated an instant, blinking in the indistinct light, and had walked deliberately to the table in the nearest corner to the girl who watched him.

Sitting with crossed ankles on the dais at the far end of the room, Naida smoked silently, her slim, lithe body drawn up taut like some young, roused desert panther. It was the American, she decided, the one of whom Zaradi had talked to Kali. She saw a tall, well-set-up youngster, about twenty-five, dressed in gray traveling garb. His features were strong and determined, his eyes blue and quizzical even in meeting her own. He had a sudden, one-sided, credulous smile, she noticed, when Haddad, the Syrian boy, offered him refreshments. Drake had said once, that smile was worth millions to the boy in winning him friends.

Before the first night's visit was past

Naida found more to admire about him. He raised his cap to old Batooka when he asked her the way to the Sakkara. Batooka was over eighty, and wrinkled like a baboon. Also, when he watched her dance Naida observed he had not leered and grinned like the European men who frequented Zaradi's private refreshment room. And he talked to Haddad until the boy lingered near him, eager to serve and listen.

The second night after her dance Naida had deliberately stepped from the dais down to the table where he sat alone. Batooka observed the move, and talked to herself as she cleared away glasses and crumbled fig cakes for the stalking pair of sleepy gray apes at her bare heels.

"Why did you ask Batooka the way to Sakkara?" she asked abruptly.

He met her gaze with eyes as steady and untroubled as her own.

"There is a Frenchwoman, the Countess Tavarin, who asked me this morning, and I wanted to tell her."

"Countess Jacqueline Tavarin. Zaradi knows her. She comes here every year after strange jewels. You do not even know what Sakkara is, do you?" She leaned back her head negligently, eying him through half-closed lashes almost pityingly, he thought. "There are tombs there, better tombs than at Gizah, not so good as at Luxor. Persuade the countess to travel to Luxor this time. Tell her for me there was a find this week. Kali brought me earrings from a girl mummy. He gave a donkey boy five piasters for them. The countess would give me a thousand. See?" She swung her head from side to side nonchalantly, exhibiting the small, dangling pendants of beaten gold set with unpolished emeralds, dangling from her pink lobes.

"Royal mummies are famous for their appetites, aren't they?" Barry asked.

"The great Hathor knew the hearts of women and permitted them to take

their dearest with them into the shades. Kali says he has seen mummies slit open that were stuffed with them, just as you stuff a peacock with nuts and dates. I have no respect for a woman who only desires jewels. Is the countess very beautiful to you?"

"She's good company, but not as beautiful nor as interesting as you are." Barry smiled at her cheerfully. This was the proper retort, he knew. And not hard to say. One long, straight look into her eyes, and he felt vaguely uneasy, not so sure of his ground as he had been a moment before. There was a strange, questioning appeal, he felt, something different from the look he had seen in the eyes of other dancing girls along the native quarter. She moved away from him suddenly, her manner grave and repellent.

"Why did you say that to me? Do you think I ask for compliments? Do you imagine you must speak so to all women? Even Kali knows better than that."

He made no attempt to recall or follow her as she moved slowly and with dignity away from him to the seat behind the high Arabian screen of gilded fretwork. Seen in the mellow light from the swinging lamp above her head on the dais, he saw she was fairer skinned than the girls of the native quarter. Her hair fell in thick, loosely curling masses to her shoulders, bound about her head with a tightly wound strip of dull-gold tissue. She wore no dangling coins, the usual prized and flaunted earnings of dancing girls. Her eyes, too, held a peculiar moss-agate coloring, brown flecked with gold about the dark, large pupils. Her lips were shaped like a wistful child's, drooping at the corners, the upper one full and arched perfectly.

"You don't look like an Arab girl," he said. "And you don't dance like one. Why aren't you patient with me? If I say the wrong thing, tell me. I am a stranger here."

She hesitated, shrugging expressive shoulders that flexed the delicate muscles of her bare arms, clasped behind her head.

"But you talk like all other men. I thought you might be different, or I would not have stepped down to speak with you. You must fasten a veil of romance around me before you find me attractive. I am not European. I was bought by Zaradi when I was ten years old from Kali, who owns the Fashnayal caravan. My father was tender of the great wells in the Daid-el-Marar oasis. Kali bartered with him for me. I do not know the price he paid. My mother died when I was born. You will think at once, ah, she is the daughter of some beautiful European woman who wandered out into the desert in some romantic adventure, and died there. I like to think that myself when I see Zaradi's women relations. They are all very fat and greasy. Batooka was my nurse. She likes you very much. She has told me my fortune, and you are the man whom the stars have selected for me. Isn't that disturbing to you?"

Her eyes mocked him with their glancing points of brilliant expression. There was a certain strange allurements, a suggestion of interest in him that stirred Barry's imagination against his will. He tried to laugh, but it sounded unsteady in his ears. His cigarette had gone out in his hand. He lighted a fresh one, avoiding her eyes as she leaned toward him, her back against the screen.

"But I have been taught everything," she went on calmly. "Zaradi entertains very famous and powerful people here. Kali named me Naida, Pink Lotus Flower. After Zaradi has fulfilled his offices as host I dance—only for celebrities, for people whom he wishes to show great favor to. You were specially honored to-night."

"What have you been taught?" Barry took refuge in a direct line of conversation.

"Everything that no woman should know," she replied softly. "Or—wait; only the chosen women of the world. Caselli, the unfrocked priest, has taught me languages and politics. Zélie de Marigny, to whom the French ambassador is devoted, delights in teaching me how to be a success as a woman. She says the greatest women of the world have been the beloved ones of emperors and kings.

"She has taught me history; how Semiramis lifted one corner of her veil as she gave the camels of the Assyrian king water, and he bought her from her father instantly and made her queen. He was very old. She stole his signet ring as he slept, and ordered him killed, and she reigned as the Great White Queen. Another whom I love was Nyassa, bride of King Candaules. She was a desert girl, also. No man had seen her face but her father. The king permitted Gyges, captain of his guard, to look upon her beauty so that he might be sure she was peerless among women. And you know what happened to him. Nyassa sent for Gyges next day, told him to kill the king or die himself by sundown. The earth was too small to hold two men who had looked upon her beauty. And I love the Greek women who ruled by love, but not Cleopatra. She was unethical."

Barry stared as she smoked with cool abstraction.

"All this so that you may be bought some day by the highest bidder," he said curtly. "Possibly Kali or some other Arab merchant. You've got the wrong code for these days. Life's set to another key to-day."

He checked himself. Why should he sit in this shadowy, unreal place, listening to this girl unfold her thoughts, and wish to God he could save her from the sensuous, age-old sex formula they were molding her life to.

"If you knew what the dead monk told me the hour before he died yonder

in the garden," she said in almost a whisper, "perhaps you might buy me yourself, Barry. I like the sound of your name. I say it over and over. Batooka does not know the meaning of it, but I have heard it often before you came. You want to know? Not from Zaradi. No." She laughed down at him. "From the fountain in the garden. It falls and says to me, 'Bar-ree,' like that. And when the bells sound very far off at sundown they say to me, 'Bar-ree,' very long and softly sweet, like that. And at twilight there is some bird that flies around in long, beautiful circles. I see it from the topmost terrace. It flies high and then darts toward the river, and it calls to me, 'Bar-ree, Bar-ree,' very faint and far off, but I have heard it. You do not believe any of this, do you?"

Batooka had waddled to the far end of the café. There was no sound but the light fall of water in the fountain. Above her the awning of gold silk was thrown back to the vivid blue of the Egyptian night. The garden of the upper terrace sent strange fragrance straying over them, perfume of dreaming lilies that mingled with the incense smoldering in the squat, bronze dragon on Zaradi's desk.

Barry rose slowly, his eyes fixed on the girl above him.

"I'd believe anything to-night," he said between set teeth as he started toward her.

Something sang whiningly above his shoulder from the gloom of the arched stone doorway behind him, escaped the girl as she swerved aside, and lodged in the carved fretwork of the Arabian screen.

CHAPTER II.

Zaradi examined the curved, two-edged blade musingly. Along its glittering surface ran peculiar characters, delicately shaped like Syriac or Arabic. At Naida's sharp cry he had emerged from

the curving stairway that wound at one end of the room into his private quarters above.

Barry heard his voice giving commands in rapid-fire Arabic. The lights in the narrow hanging lamps were extinguished by the boy Haddad. Batooka hesitated near the girl, her crumpled lips parted in an alert grin of delighted cunning. After the lights went out Barry caught the patter of bare, running feet along the stone flags of the courtyard, headed for the doorway. He started after them, but felt the girl's cool fingers clasp his wrist as she pressed close to him as if in dread.

"Wait here," she whispered. "It is not you they are after. It was meant for me. I am afraid."

It was exasperating, the silence, the smothering darkness in the long, narrow room, the suspense. He had flung one arm around the girl's waist, holding her close to him. She yielded passively, her head back on his shoulder as she seemed to listen intently. Suddenly he missed her, and found himself resenting her leaving him without a word. What mystery had he become a part of, what hidden menace of this city that bloomed beside its mystical river like the rose-tipped lotus springing from the slime?

There had been a chair near him, he remembered, a high-backed, carved Turkish one. He found it gropingly. It would make a weapon in case of a rush from the court into the upper room. But no further disturbance stole out of the fragrant night. He found himself standing alone except for the boy Haddad. Batooka returned and relighted the single hanging lamp of perforated bronze that dangled above Zaradi's desk on the dais. By its faint glow Barry saw the figure of the Mohammedan seated quietly at its customary place. He was watching him, and motioned Barry to join him. Batooka produced silver cigarette boxes set in turquoise, and several decanters of wine.

"Coffee, please," said Barry. "You provide stirring entertainment, Zaradi."

His host smiled back at him benignly, his large brown eyes untroubled.

"You have no enemies in Cairo, no?" he asked deferentially, as if the admission of such were an ennobling trait in a stranger.

"None that I know of. I landed here yesterday."

"Ah, yes. From Constantinople. I remember. With a letter from my good friend, Mantzon." He unlocked a lower drawer in the cabinet of olivewood behind him, and drew out the exact mate to the dagger.

"If you are interested, this is the knife found in the heart of the dead monk this morning. It is not an ordinary knife, you will observe. It is the sacrificial knife used of old by priests for the slitting of the throats of goats or lambs."

Naida's eyes watched him half mockingly as Barry bent his head over the characters along the thin blade.

"What order did the monk come from?"

"A remnant of the Christian fanatics who dwell between the river and the sea. They are apart from the Copts, who have mingled with other races in Egypt and accepted the changed order. This group holds to the ancient rules and ritual of the old cenobites, the group that gathered around Anthony of Thebes, and made their home in the hidden places of the desert. They hold to their secrets jealously even to-day. This girl Naida interested one of the young brothers who was visiting the city in disguise. He came here to my café, and was a fool like any other man when a beautiful female tempted him."

He held up his hand mildly at Naida's hot protest.

"Be still, my pearl amongst all women. They are all alike. They cannot be silent even when their own lives depend upon it. The third time he came here

he tried to induce her to go away with him, out of reach, into Europe, thence to America. Something he told to her, and for that they killed him."

He pressed a hidden bell beneath his foot. Batooka came reluctantly from the doorway behind the curtained recess. He gave her orders briefly, with no apparent interest in what he was saying. The old woman retorted in a torrent of curses, her arms upraised with fluttering finger tips over his head. Naida laughed delightedly, shutting her up with a sharp tap on the back of her head with her own finger tip.

"She hates Zaradi when he abuses me," she told Barry serenely. "I am to be shut up for nine days until the clamor and excitement over the dead monk dies down. Do not call to me in the moonlight, beloved owl, lest I put my head out of the window and a third knife fly at it. And if Zaradi tries to sell me to Kali, you will come and outbid the brown pig, will you not? Ah, but you will not be here; I forget. You will be treading on the Countess Tavarin's shadow by the tombs of the kings. May she die a thousand deaths within the new moon! Good night, my beloved. The stars have whispered to me thy name since the beginning of the world."

She blew him a contemptuous kiss behind Zaradi's placid shoulders, and passed out ahead of Batooka, a slender, silk-swathed figure, bare feet slipping in yellow satin French mules instead of Eastern sandals, and no bangled anklets jingling.

Zaradi slid a box of cigarettes across the inlaid table, his eyes smilingly attentive to the eager response in Barry's as they followed the disappearing form past the silken rug over the doorway.

"You fall into our ways too soon, Mr. Braxton," he said pleasantly. "You have only been here since yesterday, you say? One lives a lifetime overnight sometimes. Are you amused?"

"Amused?" Barry lit up the thin, brown-wrapped Zerafe, and smiled back quickly. "I don't know. I ran down for a few days on business, but looking for a good time, too. I've always wanted to see Egypt. And I've run into a murder mystery, a countess who asks me to find out about some royal emeralds in some mummy, and"—he hesitated slightly—"and your own very interesting program for wayfarers. Yes, I think I am amused."

Zaradi ignored the edge to his tone.

"Countess Tavarin is very well known here for her love of rare jewels. She is a seeker after the unusual. It is the sparkle in life's wine to her, that is all. A very beautiful and sensible woman, but she would try to intrigue the Prophet to get the jewel from his turban if it caught her fancy. Most women will sell their ears for a string of pearls larger than all other women own."

"And the monk?" Barry tilted his glass until the cognac left its arc of golden oil along the rim.

"A boy roped too soon. He smelled freedom, saw Naida, and—what would you?" Zaradi's hands saluted heaven with plump, pink-shaded palms of deprecation. "They always send out one to spy upon another in these secret orders. He was drunk with passion, blabbing promises out yonder on the moonlit terrace to entice the girl's fancy. Naida laughed at him as she does at all men. Batooka led her back to retire, and the knife enlightened the young brother upon the folly of his ways. It is very simple, you see. All life is simple, and may be reduced in a few words to certain equations: love, hate, revenge, ambition. What else is there?"

"You think the knife was meant for Naida?" Barry lifted the curious weapon again, balancing it in his fingers. "Why?"

"Surely not for yourself. It is the women who intrigue and make trouble. The one who threw it aimed from the

lower entrance to the courtyard. He must, then, have passed through the street doorway and the coffee room. There is no other way to reach it. It is past twelve. The boy Haddad saw no one pass, so he says, but he is a Syrian and a born liar." He smiled back at Barry with arch benignity. "How long do you linger in Cairo, Mr. Braxton?"

"About a week, I suppose." Barry met his glance with curiosity and a more enlightened interest than he had felt at first.

Zaradi's face was different from the usual mask of the Oriental, in that it showed humor glinting behind its impassivity. The wizard of Cairo, Mantzon had called him once. Barry spoke abruptly, following his impulse to weigh Zaradi with his own doubts:

"What do you know about Henri Mantzon?"

"He is your friend. That should satisfy you." The large brown eyes did not abate one flicker of serenity. "He is a very reliable, trustworthy person, I believe."

"Oh, cut it," Barry said uneasily. "Listen, Zaradi, I don't know a thing about him except as we met casually in friends' houses the past seven months. He gave me an awkward impression. He's too willing to be accommodating, if you get what I mean. When a man goes out of his way a hundred times to do you a favor you wonder what his game is. Is he an Arab?"

"No. From Anatolia, a Turk with an American training. He has spent many years in your land. His mother was a French actress, Babette Vaudry. He was a rug exporter for years. Now he is rich, and would be considered a savant, a connoisseur of art, a good fellow, what you wish. He is cursed with unbridled curiosity and, as you say, too much solicitude for his friends. But otherwise he is entitled to his place in the sun, like you and myself." Zaradi waited

expectantly, but Barry smoked in silence, his eyes half closed as he squinted up at the strip of skv beyond the silk awning.

"You must not permit these happenings here in Cairo to mislead your mind with fantasy, my friend," he went on. "I assure you, life flows in easy channels here, if one has the good taste and discretion to mind one's own affairs strictly. I will warn you about one weakness. You are on the *qui vive*, seeking an *affaire d'amour*. Now, wait, please. I shall keep Naida shut up for nine days. If you can dispose as easily of your beautiful countess with the penchant for royal emeralds, you may get back to Constantinople with the same pair of shoes on your feet that you left in. Otherwise, I warn you freely.

"There is a substratum of life hidden here in Cairo that it is best no foreigner interferes with. We are a separate people. We do not like outside tampering with our affairs. We have fought for dear life since the war closed, with the Allies ripping away one member after another of our very body. Now the voice of Islam calls to her own, as a mother cries to her children for succor. You are young and inexperienced. You should never have been sent here at this time. I am called Zaradi the Just. I give to you, my boy, the full benefit of that title. Go back to your own land. Meddle not in that which has no turning aside for such as you or your race. You may play with petty strategy and diplomacy, but no statecraft in the world today can stem the flood of brotherhood. Blood to blood, each to each, the world over the call goes forth. It is a good time to be living in."

His lips parted in a smile of perfect bonhomie, humor. His tone had never been raised from its low-pitched, courteous note. Barry rose restlessly, crushed the half-burned cigarette under his heel on the floor.

"Thanks, but I will stay as long as it is

necessary. One may purchase other shoes, you know."

He smiled at Zaradi as he paid his bill, returned the latter's low bow and easy gesture of farewell with a nod, and made his way out. As he came to the low-ceiled, deserted shop he passed an Arab just descending the three steps from the street. To Barry he resembled other lean, stately, aloof forms he had encountered in the native quarter, somber-eyed, latent majesty lurking behind the indolent movements. But as he walked down the Street of the Pomegranates, Kali, owner of the rich *Fashnayat* caravan, paused to look after him, registering on his memory the face and figure of the American.

CHAPTER III.

On reaching his hotel, Barry found a note awaiting him from the Countess Tavarin. It was after one, he noticed, but he felt no inclination to sleep. There came a throbbing cadence of dance music from the casino beyond the palm-fringed court. He tore open the envelope, standing to read it in the light at the broad veranda steps. It was characteristic of her, he thought, catching the message at a glance.

I wish to see the native dancers at the Café l'Orient. Will you take me there after midnight?
JACQUELINE TAVARIN.

It fitted in with his mood. Turning back to the desk, he sent up word to the countess that he had returned, and would meet her in twenty minutes, as soon as he had changed to evening dress. His trunk had arrived, he found on reaching his room. After the unsettling effect of Zaradi's warnings it was reassuring to unlock it, throw it open, and find his leather portfolio locked and safe. He had placed the sealed envelope in it, rather than trust it in his own coat pockets during the shifting journey.

As he handled the slim object it occurred to him wrong and foolish to trust so momentous an issue to the hazard of

a one-man job. Several copies should have been made, two or three men sent, all strangers to each other. If one died or failed to make good, the other two might win out. He dallied with the idea musingly. But then there were three chances of the secret message falling into strange hands; this way, only one. He hesitated at replacing the letter in the leather case. The telephone rang lightly. Madame la comtesse was quite ready. Would he be delayed much longer?

He slipped the letter back into one pocket of the case, locked it in the trunk, and went down to join the countess. Of all the varied types of women whom he had met since his arrival in the East, he had felt the least responsibility toward her. She made no demands upon his emotions, and yet stimulated him mentally with her rare gift of responsiveness.

He had met her first, he remembered, at a supper party given by Mantzon for a few chosen friends. Among other women that night, she had the brilliance and clarity of a diamond. There was something boyishly autocratic in her utter freedom from restraint. He had heard of her wealth and assured position with the foreign set. She had told him she expected to go on to Cairo with a friend, and would probably see him there in a few days.

The afternoon of his arrival he had seen her having tea at one of the tables in the hotel garden. She was with another woman—English, he found out when he joined them later.

Lady Harriet Edenham was middle-aged, athletic, blessed with a fine, roseate complexion and a melodious speaking voice. She had chatted of her African explorations while Jacqueline Tavarin listened with a slight smile, her eyes missing nothing in their sweeping scrutiny of the gardens. Barry admired the thoroughbred grooming the countess displayed, her blond hair brushed to natural glossiness like satin, her clear,

delicately veined flesh easily coloring when she was interested or excited, her widely set blue eyes with their trick of disconcerting frankness in observing one.

She came to meet him now, dressed in filmy black georgette over silver, a long rope of emeralds around her neck. Her full-length cape of Chinese embroidered velvet hung loosely from her shoulders. She nodded to him carelessly.

"Where have you been? Cruising in forbidden areas? But it doesn't matter if we are late. After midnight they have special dancers. There is a Toureg, a man, very sensational, who dances almost nude on naked swords. After listening to Harriet all the afternoon, I need thrilling diversion. What did you find to-night that was interesting? You've been somewhere that left you tasty memories. Tell me."

He hesitated at telling her all that had happened at the café of Zaradi, but her query brought back vividly what Naida and the Turk had told him about her. Deftly, diverting her with a question, he led her into another current of thought. Had she heard of the new discovery at the Tombs of the Kings? A mummy of a girl stuffed with ancient trinkets and ornaments? She laughed.

"I mean real jewels, worth one's trouble. I met two Americans this year in Paris, on their way back home. They had gone down into the desert below Lake Moeris after some old buried treasure. They had found an Arab who professed to know the way and the place. Emeralds big as amulets, oblong, set in dull, beaten gold, they said. They had belonged once upon a time to Rhodopis, the greedy little beauty that Cheops loved. What a stupid world it would be, were it not for the caprices of the beloved women of the ages, wouldn't it?"

Barry found his attention caught with a jerk at her words, so similar to those of Naida, the dancing girl.

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"Anyway, they did not get the jewels," the countess continued happily. "One had his tongue slit; the other lost both ear lobes, poor thing. But they told me of the place, somewhere between the river and the sea."

Zaradi's words came back to him: "Between the river and the sea," where some sect or brotherhood of ascetics had their abode.

"This is the place."

She led the way, seeming familiar with her ground, as they turned under an archway, into a stone-built corridor. Following the lead of faint, throbbing music, they emerged, past a heavy rug curtain, into the interior of the café. It was like the heart of a Mexican opal in its deep-toned richness of decoration. A crimson-and-gold ibis stalked moodily about among flat lotus leaves in an onyx pool. The head waiter, a tall young Turk, resembled one whom Barry recalled seeing at a New York night resort. He wondered if they had learned to set the stage here to catch novelty seekers. The countess moved with assurance, choosing a table well toward the front, oblivious to the glances that followed them.

"Lady Edenham is over there with some English friends, if you feel that I am leading you in strange ways," she said, with a little smile. "Do you like it here? It is your first visit, is it not? I am always drawn back to Cairo by some peculiar attraction. The city rests me, or perhaps it is the nearness of the desert that brings surety and peace, wide spaces where one may lose old selves. You are fortunate to find yourself ordered here at this particular hour, when the Pan-Islam movement makes this the dynamic center of unrest."

Barry gave their order before replying, his mind shifting over causes at the direct line she was taking. Drake had given him to understand his mission was secret, that only Raversham knew why he was being sent to Cairo, yet Zaradi

had intimated his own knowledge of his reasons for being there, and now the countess took him at once into a curious intimacy of thought, as though they two were united by some tacit understanding. She seemed to catch at his annoyance, and continued smoothly:

"I have known Harriet Edenham since she was a girl. She is Raversham's sister, and is waiting to see him here. When I recognized you in the gardens this afternoon, I put two and two together, and guessed you had been sent to meet him. Mantzon told me, also, that you had been selected for a very complimentary commission. Harriet liked you at first sight. She has promised to take me with her into the desert. She is after black lions, and I want the emeralds of Rhodopis. Women are shallow, aren't they, easily satisfied with externals in life. At least we are concrete in our desires, where you men gamble with destinies. I wish you were free to go with us, as I told you this afternoon."

Relieved at her swerve back to familiar ground, Barry relaxed. The affair at Zaradi's had put his nerves on edge. He was ready to see intrigue and mystery in everything, he told himself. Black lions and emerald loot planted his feet firmly on an Egypt that he knew. What part of the desert would they travel to to find them?"

"Harriet hesitates." She shrugged slim shoulders dubiously. "She says, if her brother insists it is too dangerous for us to go into the interior, she will wait here until things blow over. The lions are near Lake Nygani, twelve days' journey from here—more, if we failed to get our natives together promptly. And my emeralds are ever more uncertain. They are part of a great treasure saved from the loot of Alexandria. Some holy and hustling brothers, seizing the auspicious moment, escaped with some of the most precious loot warranted to ensnare the souls of men. They

saved it from the reaching paws of Islam, and hid the whole thing somewhere down around the Theban cliffs between the river and the sea, where grand old St. Anthony was fighting the devil all by his lonesome. That is the story, as I heard it from the lad with the slit ears. Pity they had not slit his tongue, isn't it?"

Barry heard her with the curious sense of unreality stealing over him again. The dead monk found in Zardi's garden had come from the sect that made their dwelling somewhere in the cliffs between the river and the sea. With a deliberate attempt to unmask the doubt in his own mind and make it face the light, he told the countess all that had happened to him that night in the Street of the Pomegranates.

She listened quietly, checking him once as their waiters placed Turkish sweetmeats and liqueurs before them. Her eyes were blue as turquoise, he thought, a changeable blue like the sea. She did not look at him as she listened, but watched the Toureg dancer, who had stepped out into the circle below them, a bronze, living statue of gleaming flesh and quivering sinews, muscles that rippled nervously beneath the taut skin. Cymbals crashed and broke down whiningly at the mounting, insistent beat of the native drums when he stepped between the naked, crossed blades of the swords and began his dance.

Barry ceased speaking to watch also. Only the eyes of the woman beside him betrayed the effect of the barbaric ensemble upon her as she smoked quietly, half turning in her chair to see the Toureg.

Talking had ceased in the café. Men had risen in their chairs as the lights were lowered. A strange, disturbing tension seized on Barry like a contagion caught from the hidden thoughts of those about him. The man was like some reincarnation of all suppressed, primitive desires of brute man, of resist-

less lust and rapine seized and characterized in the mad, unrestrained dance he was doing.

Lady Edenham was regarding the scene with cool, appraising eyes, her elbows on the table, smoking placidly. She had smiled over at Barry once, with a slight nod of recognition. As the man fell prone to the ground and was carried out, apparently unconscious, by four young blacks, she beckoned to him to join her party with the countess.

"Not so bad, was it?" she said pleasantly. "I have seen the same thing done very much better, however, out among the tribesmen. This fellow was really very restrained in comparison, probably in our honor, but he missed the aboriginal symbolism that is the excuse for these dances. Don't you think so, Mr. Braxton?"

Her even, cultured tone brought him back to the key of the moment, even while his blood still warned him of the affinity between this native and something dormant in his own nature.

"It was like a devilish challenge, to me," said the countess lightly. "What if they all get loose some day, and civilization gets its neck wrung? We're in the minority, after all. He was like a symbol to me of that something that is running in the blood of mankind to-day everywhere, crying out for expression, the leashed monster of our lower selves. That woman in black and white, Harriet, is Zélie de Marigny. Isn't she like a sketch in *La Vie*?"

Barry followed her glance. This, then, was one of Naida's teachers, this woman who half lounged on her table, negligent of scrutiny, her narrow, long-lashed eyes half closed, her fingers decorated with rings to the knuckles. She was thin to attenuation, graceful as a single Japanese curved line, a study in black and white against the vivid coloring of the arabesque walls about her.

"This place always makes me think of high-tide line along a shore. Flotsam

and jetsam left by many tides," Lady Edenham remarked musingly. "They say she is much to blame for France's policy here. She hates England because her first admirer was an Englishman. Simple. The so-called good women of the world have foolishly side-stepped secret politics, and left them to the juggling machinations of women beloved by statesmen. I think we're doing the thing a bit better to-day. Mr. Braxton, who are those people at the second table along the back tier? I think they know you."

Barry turned, his brain in a tumult of conflicting theories. There was a stir among all the groups in the place as the lights went up. He found the party she had designated, and started from his chair eagerly. There was no mistake. Tom Hays, whom he had believed to be in Washington, waved one hand to him. Peggie, his wife, smiled a welcome, and next to her was a tall, blond American girl who met his gaze for one single instant, and turned away as if he had been a complete stranger.

"Do you know her?" asked the countess interestedly. "Perfect profile, hasn't she?"

"I—I am engaged to be married to her," stammered Barry. "That's Rosamond Hays."

CHAPTER IV.

On the way back to the hotel Barry found himself listening to the countess with a detached, baffled mind. Tom and his wife had been delighted to meet him. Rosamond, on the contrary, had met his eyes with a level, challenging glance and silent lips.

"You know, Barry," Peggie had whispered as he bent over her during the few moments he had with them before leaving the café. "I'm afraid you have some explaining to do. Rosamond thinks——"

"You'll kindly keep out of it, Peg,"

Rosamond had interposed curtly. "I'll interpret my own thoughts."

"I will wait for you in the gardens after breakfast." Barry had been as distant and uncompromising as herself, since she chose to condemn him without a hearing, without his even knowing for what he was condemned. As he stepped aside for them to pass, Tom had given him an understanding look.

"See you at the hotel to-night, Barry."

The countess regarded him with amused, curious eyes as they left the café just behind Lady Edenham's party.

"She is not overjoyed to find you here with me, no?" she asked. "Yet why not? Your conduct has been exemplary, I should say. You have not been surprised in any indiscretion. We were merely sight-seers like themselves. Still, all women are like that. If you belong to them by prior right of conquest, then they prefer to think of you as being always miserable when you are away from them. And you did not appear miserable to-night, Barry?"

Barry's face failed to reveal any sentiment or opinion.

"I enjoyed the evening immensely," he said.

"Did you? I wonder." She smiled up at his grave young face in the half light of the outer stairway at their hotel. "Your mind is still coasting air lanes, chasing fugitive impressions. To-morrow you will be dogging the heels of this tall, very self-possessed young American, who intends to marry you. And when shall I see you again?"

As they reached the lift in the palm-bordered corridor, he stopped beside her, smiling into her questioning eyes.

"Whenever I am lucky enough to get the chance. I may return to Constantinople on short notice, though, if you are going into the desert after your black lions."

"Raversham is due to-morrow night. I must see you again before he arrives—alone. I know I can be of service to

you, if you will let me, and I can't bear to have you fail in this, Barry." She leaned slightly toward him, her voice pitched very low. "The older men, Mantzon and his friends, wish you to fail, intend that you shall. Do not go near Zaradi's place again, do you hear? Come into the desert with us after you have seen Raversham, will you?"

"I'm due back this week, awfully sorry, countess." He smiled down at her, cheerfully noncommittal.

"You're trying to be elusive with me and very self-sufficient," she said. "You say, in effect, 'Leave me alone. I have something most important to accomplish. I may not dally over mummy emeralds or black lions. I make my own occasions.' Very good. As you like." She shrugged her white shoulders, half turning from him.

"You're laughing at me," he accused.

"Why not?" She gave him one hand lingeringly. "Come and talk with me to-morrow at eleven after you have mollified your tall, blond sweetheart."

After she had gone, he found himself in a vaguely irritated state of mind. She was also young, he argued. Why should she adopt the mature air with him of secret censor over the acts of a rampant cherub. He strolled into the lounge and found Tom waiting for him, smoking over a batch of newspapers from home.

"You're playing double dummy, old dear, aren't you?" he asked pleasantly when Barry dropped into the seat next to him. "Rosamond has gone to bed with her boots on, spurred and ready for the enemy, so to speak. Just exactly what do you mean by desecrating—that's the word Peg and she are using—desecrating the holy bond of plighted troth by fooling around with all the wild women in Cairo when you have every reason to believe that your future wife is in Washington, D. C.?"

"Give me a decent cigar." Barry spoke feelingly. "That was the Countess

Tavarin I was with, friend and guest of Lady Harriet Edenham."

"Oh, but it's not her they're making trouble over," protested Hays mildly, regarding the ash on his own half-consumed cigar with intent interest. "It's the other one."

"I don't know exactly what you're talking about." There was a tired edge to Barry's tone.

"Well, it's this way. We came in late. Had engaged rooms at Shepheard's, but Peg wanted to come here. I saw your name on the register, and went up to let you know we were here. Rosamond was crazy to see you; had a notion of surprising you with the glorious shock of her unexpected presence. Your room's on the same floor as mine, only about half a mile around the corner. She insisted on going with me. Peg happened to be dressing. I knocked on your door, heard somebody moving around—closing a window, I think—and went in, thinking of course it was you. And that's all. We both saw her."

Barry eyed him with deep interest, his mind scouting to Zaradi's café and the girl he had last seen there.

"There's nobody in my room," he protested. "I've been out all the evening, anyway."

"Don't get me wrong, Barry." The other's tone was easy and moderate. "The East is the East. I've been coming over here once a year for the past twelve years, and I know how it gets you. But you keep to the native quarter in that sort of thing. You don't bring them here, for instance."

"I never brought any one here," Barry said quietly. "It's all some damned mix-up, Tom. I don't like it. Come on up with me now, will you? I'll prove to you that I'm right."

Hays followed him upstairs in silence, a smile deepening the wrinkles at the corners of his close mouth. He had come to Cairo on his yearly trip covering the large tobacco centers of the East.

Peg and Rosamond had insisted on accompanying him, merely to allow his sister the opportunity of seeing her fiancé at Constantinople. It had been a welcome surprise to find him staying at the same hotel here in Cairo, but the discovery in his rooms of a young and startlingly attractive native girl had shaken even Tom's belief in another man's right to his own code of living.

He waited, however, until they had reached Barry's rooms. Apparently nothing had been disturbed. Barry passed into the small inner bedroom, and opened up his steamer trunk. Both the trunk and leather portfolio were locked as he had left them. He unlocked the latter, and drew out the long, narrow official envelope, sealed twice at the end. Grinning with relief, he sat back on his heels, looking up at Tom.

"It's all right. Nothing's missing. Maybe they've got native servants here, chambermaids——"

"Do they use the windows as exits and look like Gautier's idea of an Egyptian houri?" Hays crossed to the window and opened the shutters wide. Outside stretched a narrow balcony covered with heavy, clambering vines. Above and below were similar balconies before each window. Below lay the gardens, shadowy mysteries of the night, silent, fragrant, beneath the tall poinsettia trees bending under mantles of crimson stars. "Some one has climbed down here from the upper balcony," he said. "Who's got the suite above this?"

"Lady Edenham. She's above suspicion."

"Nobody is these days, especially women. Listen to me, and let's smoke this out." He took the nearest chair. "What are you down here for, anyway?"

"Official business."

"I see. Tell me how long you've been in Cairo, the places you've been to, and the people you have met."

Barry recounted briefly but connect-

edly his experience since his arrival, giving full details of the happenings at Zaradi's.

"Who sent you there?" asked Hays keenly.

"Fellow named Mantzon; wealthy ex-rug-importer whom I met in Constantinople; friend of Drake and everybody worth knowing; Henri Mantzon."

"I don't know him by name, but he sounds like one of the private clearing houses on this Near East deviltry. They are littering Europe with them. This man Zaradi I do know. He was under suspicion in the last Nationalist uprising. Zoralyi Pasha escaped into the desert, but Zaradi is his eyes here in Cairo. You've been right at the switch in this movement, and I'll bet you don't know any of the wires they're tapping."

"I've been training for exactly this sort of thing for seven months, you know, under R. C. Drake," Barry said with some reserve. "I'd have been shipped back home in a week if he hadn't believed I was there."

"All right." Tom smiled back at him knowingly. "Now listen to me. England's blocked Turkey on the Dardanelles, hasn't she? But what about Africa? How about Asia? A Turk's not the man you have to watch in this movement. Your Turk is a usurper to the Arab. The Arab fights from religious frenzy; the Turk is a political opportunist. But they're all Mussulmen under the hide. This thing that's creeping over white man's land down here like flood tide means every Mohammedan in Africa, Asia, Europe, all over the world, but Egypt will play the reserves when the hour strikes. The hot-bed lies here, Barry, but the fire signals are ready to light on every oasis in the desert. Drake's a wise man with a big vision, but he can't do a hell of a lot, with the States doing their usual coquettish and hesitant act, dallying with this question as if it were a county campaign issue."

"Our office is to stabilize commercial conditions," Barry stated firmly. "It's none of our business, these religious reactions."

"There spoke your daddy, not you," retorted Hays sharply. "You're young, and, whether you know it or not, you belong to the growing majority of civilized humanity that is asking itself enlightening questions on the causes of war, the trickery of a false patriotism that bases its ideals on commercialized hatred of its neighbors. And, believe me, Barry, we're beginning to measure the net result and hunt for the fire bugs."

Barry listened moodily, the advice of Zaradi recurring to his mind. Islam, too, had her place in the sun. What immutable law might be set so that each race and people could be assured faith and justice from their neighbors? Class honor, fair play, the law of the pack, of the hive, the unwritten law of brotherhood that sounded the dominant strain in the new symphony of living, each suggested itself as the way out.

He felt himself apart alike from Hays' concrete argument, and Drake's vision of abstract justice. The bird's-eye view of world happenings fascinated him, as it had since his arrival in Constantinople. He found himself responding with a curious sympathy and fellowship to the cries of all: Christian, Mohammedan, Jew, Russian, Japanese. What was it he had balanced often in his mind at college, the Malthusian argument: too many children, not enough of the good old bread and butter to go around, races that must spread out and colonize or perish? Something there must be beyond Tom's argument, something in the right to live. Was not this at the bottom of the whole unhealthy, teeming mass of irritated humanity?

Hays' voice recalled him sharply. He held out something in his hand that he had just picked up from beneath the edge of the couch which stood between the windows. It was a small yellow

satin French mule, edged in gold lace and pearls.

"The clock must have struck for Cinderella," said Hays with a close-lipped grin.

Barry stared at the evidence in dead silence and amazement, his hands plunged deep in his pockets, his hair tousled to a crest of unrest. Naida had been there in his rooms during his absence, since the time when he had last seen her at the upper terrace of the café. Also, she must have been startled by the appearance of Rosamond and Hays, and had made a hurried exit by way of the window, losing the satin mule in her flight. Yet why, he reasoned quickly, would she venture out at night with such absurd footgear on? It was some distance from the hotel down to the old part of town where the Street of the Pomegranates meandered.

Without telling Hays his suspicions, he examined the balcony himself while Tom watched him. The climbing vines were strong enough to support his own weight, he found out. They clung in a great flower-starred net over the garden side of the hotel. It would have been easy for the girl to have reached his room either from the room above or from the first floor, a few feet above the ground. Lady Edenham occupied the upper suite, he knew. The Countess Tavarin was next to her on that floor.

It would have been easier, he thought, for Naida to have passed through the deserted gardens and reached his room from the balcony below. Yet he could not find any reason for her coming to him at that hour, unless she had escaped from Zaradi's nine-day sentence of imprisonment in a fit of dare-deviltry. Curiosity might have brought her adventuring to the English quarters, if she had been of any other race, but, knowing the Arab women and their preference for sequestration, he could not guess why she should have eluded the vigilance of Batooka or Zaradi.

"You can hunt out there all night," said Hays from within, "and get no nearer the truth. I've got to leave you. It's nearly two-thirty, and Peg will be waiting for me with a thousand questions. I think this is the simple low-down on the whole jam, Barry. Islam wants the secret word that you are carrying to England from America. You can be sure that every Mussulman who was needed, along the route from the minute you left the Porte, knows why you are here, and has been commandeered to harass and impede you at every turn, so you'll fail. If you want to give me those papers, I'll keep them for you until Raversham gets here. They'll let me alone. If they get you, I'll see that they are delivered into his own hands."

"Thanks," Barry smiled. "I'll see it through myself, Tom. Drake's own orders. All I ask of you is this: if you don't see me around when Raversham gets here, do all you can to find me. I'll let you know, if I can, whatever happens."

"Why don't you change your room now? Got a gun?"

Barry nodded, enjoying the puzzled, anxious look in Hays' eyes.

"Don't worry over me. If it's the way you say, and they want the Drake letter, they'll get me, wherever I go. I'll stay here. It's only one night more."

"For fear she may decide to come back?" asked Hays. "All right. It's your own affair. If you want me, I'm in two hundred and sixteen." He stood with his hand on the doorknob, weighing Barry musingly. "Don't believe any of these women, not one of them: your little native girl, or this countess, not even Raversham's sister."

Barry laughed at him, closed and locked the door after his visitor. Waiting long enough to be certain that Hays had reached his own rooms, he picked up the yellow satin mule with fingers that thrilled to the touch of anything

that had been so close to her, so symbolic, too, of the strange, facetlike contradictions he had discovered in the girl Naida's character.

Its edge was bordered in delicate, gold-thread lace and tiny pink rosebuds. The toe was a lattice work of seed pearls; the absurdly high, frail Louis heel was covered in gold brocade. He wondered if the Frenchwoman, Zélie de Marigny, had given them to her. And at the thought he remembered all she had told him. She had full data on royal favorites. The beloved women of the ages, the countess had called them. Did Naida wear these exquisite, costly trifles, he wondered, because they gratified some hidden longing in her own nature? She had left off every piece of the customary Arab girl's trinket jewelry, the anklets, bracelets, necklaces, the headband of gold coins. But she had exploited the earrings of the mummy with grave pride.

He lifted the slipper to his lips, kissing the tiny point of the toe. Inside he felt a slight resistance to the pressure, the faintest crush of paper. He drew it out, a slip of thin rice paper folded many times, and read eagerly the message she had left for him.

I have come, beloved owl, and find you have too many golden keys to your heart of hearts. Yet the river flows by the House of Stars, and I wait patiently, as one must who deals with fools.

CHAPTER V.

He rose restlessly, pacing the floor, seized with a desire to go questing forth into the sleeping city, down into the native quarters, to stand again in the Street of the Pomegranates below the garden of Zaradi, and see her face gazing down at him, tempting, taunting, remote.

Shutting off his light, he half swung over the iron railing of the balcony. It was amazingly easy, he found, gripping

the intertwined strands of the vine, to lower himself to the first floor. He tried it once, pulling himself up again to his own windows, thrilled at the thought of Naida trying to reach him by the same route. It stirred his imagination, the mental picture of her there in his rooms waiting to see him, for what reason? Supposing, he asked himself, she had come there to him as a last resort, finding herself in some unescapable peril. She had given him a suggestion of this in their last talk together, that the flung knife had been intended for herself, not for him, that Zaradi had his own motives for using her as a magnet to attract the senses and caution of those whom he wished to use in his own puppet dance.

Yet it was more than the mere zest of a new adventure which drew him irresistibly back to her. From the first moment of their meeting, Barry had been dangerously aware of the spark of contact, the intangible something which had seemed to hold them together that first night in the darkness when she had turned to him for protection from the unseen menace that had threatened her.

The memory of her head as it had rested back on his shoulder, the strange, subtle perfume of her hair as it had brushed his cheek and lips—recalling all this now, he asked himself why should he not take up the hidden challenge of her message to him, and follow her to the House of Stars.

The very sound of the name stirred the imagination, fired his determination and longing to see her again, to find out why she had paid him the secret visit, in spite of Hays' warning. He stepped back into his dressing room to change his evening clothes for less conspicuous garb, and suddenly the trunk caught his eye, a mute, but effective, reminder of his obligation to Drake and Raversham.

What if he were to get into some trouble down in the native quarter, was killed, thrown into the river? His mes-

sage would never be delivered. Perhaps, he thought, this might be their plan—Zaradi, Mantzon, and those behind them in the Islam movement against America and England—to trap him with the lure of a girl's beauty and cause him to betray his trust. It was a trick as old as the history of nations. Yet he doubted, for no reason excepting his faith in Naida herself, in the silent appeal of her eyes, the unspoken confession on her lips when the knife had been thrown. Something she had longed to tell him, he felt sure, something connected with the dead monk in the garden. Had she come to his room at the hotel to open her lips and tell him this, perhaps before Zaradi would shut her up for nine days as he had threatened to do?

He undressed, slipped on a bath robe, and stretched out on the couch in the outer room. There was no light except the two long oblongs of luminous blue, where the windows opened wide to the night sky. He smoked restlessly, divided between his duty and his desire to see Naida, his fear that she might be in danger and had turned to him for help.

He dozed off into a sleep, how long he could not have told. As he opened his eyes he found himself listening, every nerve taut as a hauled-up brake. He knew there was another human being besides himself in the room. Feigning sleep, he lay motionless, and the noise came once more, a strange, soft, sliding sound along the bare, polished floor of inlaid woods. It came directly from beneath the couch on which he lay. Barry put out one hand in the darkness, and it came in contact with flesh, slippery, naked, moist.

With one leap, he had flung himself out of bed astride the crawling body, his fingers gripping the strained, lean throat. Hands were flung up in supplication, not menace. Twisting the head back, he recognized the contorted features of the Syrian boy, Haddad.

Releasing him in irritated amazement, Barry demanded what the devil he meant by hiding there. The boy grinned back at him appealingly, his lips drawn tight against his gleaming teeth, his black eyes brilliant in the half light, excited but friendly as he stared at Barry.

"What do you want here?" He repeated the question.

"Naida leave me here." The boy spoke simply. "Tell me to stay, to watch you while you sleep. It is the hour before dawn, so I go."

"She left you here?" Barry tried to grasp the intent behind this. "To guard me, you say. Against what? Did she come here to warn me against something that was to happen to me here tonight?"

Haddad nodded, his arms folded across his bare, brown chest. After a moment's thought Barry crossed to the table, picked up the satin mule, and gave it to the boy, first writing below her own message its answer.

I will find my way soon. Keep my heart, Naida.

Too excited to take second thought on what he had written, he gave it to the boy.

"Take that to her, and say that I'm all right."

"I will not even see her again," said Haddad gravely. "She has gone in the night down the river to the House of Stars. No one may see her there."

"Where is the place? Can you take me there?" Barry demanded.

"It is Zaradi's private palace below the city, down the Nile, where the old Mamelukes had their palaces. Zaradi has restored one of these for his own use."

"And she has gone there for nine days." He smiled with relief and lit a cigarette. After all, there was nothing to it but the effort to escape from Zaradi's imposed penance. And there was time for him to see her again. Ravens-

ham was due that night, the countess had told him in confidence. He would see him at once, deliver the letter from Drake, and be free to follow his own path, even to the mysterious House of Stars. He looked at the boy keenly, speculating on his faithfulness. The best proof was that Naida had trusted him.

"You serve her, do you not?"

"I am no Mussulman," Haddad replied proudly. "I am a Christian. Naida is Christian, too."

Barry frowned, trying to remember.

"She is Arab, she told me, niece to Zaradi; or, no, she said that Kali had bought her from her father, keeper of the wells at some oasis. Isn't this true?"

"She is Christian," the boy repeated obstinately. "I serve her as she tells me."

This opened the way to wide conjecture in Barry's mind, whether she had used it deliberately as leverage to get Haddad's unquestioning service, or whether it might be true and the reason why she had turned to him, trusting him.

"Listen." He leaned across the table toward the erect, motionless figure. "I can't get away from here until late tonight. I want you to take me then to this place where she is, understand?"

"I will take you down the river and show you the place, but we may not enter." The boy's tone was slow and monotonous.

"All right, take me there." Barry drew money from his pocket and handed it to Haddad. "Buy me the same sort of clothes you wear yourself. I don't know the kind. Not Arab stuff, Syrian. I'll meet you around midnight. Where will you wait with a boat?"

"At the Merubi landing. We may only go down the river, and I will point out to you where she is. We may not enter." He repeated it as he counted the coins.

"That's my worry," Barry said briefly.

After the boy had gone he took a

cold shower and dressed. It was a little past six when he finished, too early to call Tom. Haddad had left the yellow satin mule untouched, and, in the reaction to romance, he looked at it in the clear morning light with oddly conflicting sentiments, suspecting his own desire to see her again, wondering if the countess were right, if Zaradi were in some plot to detain and confuse him, and were using the girl as a decoy.

Too restless to remain in his rooms longer, he went down to the deserted palm lounge which stretched across the east side of the hotel. He took a seat at a small table and ordered coffee and poppy-seed rolls from the statuesque young waiter. Glancing up, he found himself looking straight into the eyes of Rosamond Hays, four tables away. She was in riding costume, a cool, tan linen, white shirt, black tie, black hat, everything beautifully crisp and correct. Her eyes held a quizzical look as they met his, and she looked away deliberately to her companion. Barry recognized him, a Captain Archer, who had been with Lady Edenham's party the night before.

Instead of her attitude hurting or angering him, he found himself regarding her impersonally. It was childish of her to act resentful and peevish before she had even heard his explanation, he thought, and yet what explanation could he give when the situation was so obvious?

There had been a girl in his rooms, a girl so attractive and astonishingly picturesque that nothing he might say would cause Rosamond, or any other girl, to believe he had no knowledge of her presence there. He drank his coffee leisurely, unembarrassed by the unexpected encounter. Peggie herself joined them presently. She nodded to him easily, but with a touch of coolness, which added to Barry's determination to let all friendly overtures come from the other side. When Hays strolled through

the lounge he smiled with relief, and joined him.

"You're all here?" Hays asked. "Nothing happened?"

Barry decided not to tell him of the Syrian boy or of what he had told him. He fully intended going to this place called the House of Stars before another daybreak, and he wanted the glamour of the trip to be undisturbed by Hays' laconic humor or cynical dismissal of romance as a trap for the youthful and unwary.

They sat talking over their coffee and cigarettes until, with reluctance, Archer took his leave. Barry watched him as he leaned over Rosamond, a good, clean-cut, husky Britisher, blond, well bred, well groomed. Two days ago the sight would have left him uneasy and indignant. Now he viewed it with a certain relief that he was ashamed to acknowledge, even to himself. When Tom insisted upon his going over to their table with him he showed his nonchalance in his manner as he greeted both Peggie and her sister. Rosamond barely lifted her long lashes at his greeting, though she returned it.

"We wanted to see the sunrise from the citadel," Tom said cheerfully. "Old stuff to me; new to the girls. Didn't know you'd be up so early, or I'd have let you know we were going."

"Part of the joy and fun in being here is that you never know what you're going to do next," Barry replied lazily.

"I want to go into the desert," Peggie leaned her bare elbows on the table, and smoked industriously at a long, thin, brown-wrapped native cigarette she had just discovered. "Captain Archer has been telling us all about those people you were with last night, Barry; Lady Edenham and the Countess Tavarin. Think of them going way out into the desert to hunt black lions by themselves! He says that Lady Edenham likes you very much."

"She's a splendid old girl," Barry said

heartily. "Wonderful type, drove an ambulance through the war, ran three hospitals on her various estates, has settled all life's problems to her own satisfaction, and is like a rare, lovable modern sibyl. Life sags for a moment, and she comes here for the next thrill."

"Black lions, Barry, or you?" asked Peg teasingly. "I think the woman they call the countess extremely interesting."

"Yes. She's following a fresh spoor. Not lions, jewels. This Luxor business has started up new mummy booms everywhere. If I were detached, I'd follow for the fun of it."

Again Rosamond gave him the full, slow measure of her glance, returned with interest.

"Are you going to Lady Edenham's dinner to-night?" Peg asked. "Captain Archer just said he would manage to have her meet us some time during the day. She's giving some sort of an informal party to-night, if her brother arrives in time. I've always admired him. He's like Allenby and all the Englishmen of that type one admires, the lean, silent, soldierly ones who die and say nothing. I'm crazy to meet him. Yes, Tom, darling"—she rose from the table happily—"I see all of your secret signals, and I'm coming. For Heaven's sake, youngsters, be sensible and straighten this up for the honor of the family and the breed, and everything else. Don't be difficult, Rosamond. You're not married to him yet, you know, so you needn't give too good a dress rehearsal."

When they were alone Barry waited deliberately for her to break the silence between them. Yet when she chose to do so even he was unprepared for the directness of her attack.

"I'm through, Barry," she said quietly. "I hope I'm as much of a modernist as any other girl, but there are limits of good taste that one balks at. I want to give this back to you." She handed him her engagement ring across the ta-

ble, a solitaire set deep in platinum. "It doesn't matter a tinker's dam to me, you know, what Tom or Peggie think about this. I happen to be the person most concerned, and I shall judge for myself."

He looked past her at the sunlit vista of palm-bordered streets beyond the hotel, filling up with the usual varicolored groups. An orange-and-blue flagpole rose from the center of the flower bed over in the circular plot of green, where four streets converged. Half closing one eye, he aimed for the golden ball on the top and threw the ring. The faint, musical ring of gold on copper came back on the still air.

"Gee, I did hit it," Barry exclaimed. He breathed with relief. "Have more coffee with me, won't you?"

Her eyes accused him of flippancy when he should have been hopelessly crushed.

"I like your captain," he said irrelevantly.

"If you're trying to pin a consolation prize on him, you are wrong again," she said coolly. "Certainly he is a solace after one has had a grand, disillusioning shock, but he is quite capable of winning on his own, Barry, I assure you. At least, he is cosmopolite enough not to pull any such bonehead, idiotic play as you have. Tom says it isn't done, even here in Cairo. You could be discredited, as it is."

Barry smoked in silence, checking the answers that leaped to his mind. Doubtless she was right, if he had planned to bring Naida deliberately to his rooms at the hotel, but the point was, he had not. He had been ignorant of any such happening, but he could not prove this to Rosamond. He took another line.

"Archer's a fine-looking fellow, much better type than I am. Now that this is over, let's talk as friends. I've an idea that, if we had ever married, I'd have missed your friendship. And I just want to tell you this, and you can believe

it or not as you see fit, but it's the straight goods: I did not know that girl was in my rooms. I never took her there, or planned to have her there, and I don't even know why she came."

"I believe you, Barry," she said quietly. "Why not, since you make a point of wishing me to? But you do know her. She must have come to you feeling sure of her welcome there. Who is she?"

"I wish to God I knew," he exclaimed with a fervor that startled her. "I met her at an Arabian café in the native quarter. She danced there, not in the regulation way, but for private guests."

"I see," Rosamond said slowly. "Do you like her very much?"

He was silent, looking away from her, smoking with long inhalations.

"If it would help her at this moment, in the smallest way, I'd just as soon die. Same old stuff, isn't it?" he grinned over at her boyishly. "But, honestly, Rosamond, it's the queerest thing I've ever known; like a spell of enchantment. Why, just the instant our eyes met, just the mere touch of her hand, the sound of her voice—it's sort of contralto, musical but throaty—I can't explain it to you, but she's got me, body and soul."

"I know." She smiled back at him half shyly. "Bertrand's like that to me. It's good we found out in time, isn't it, Barry? And we'll stay friends. If I can be of any help to you, you know I'll be very glad to."

He gripped her extended hand close in his, his eyes frowning as he stared at her.

"Gee, Rosamond, but you're a splendid pal. I may call you on that."

"Do! I mean it." She met his long, eager gaze fully, then relaxed, closing her eyes as she laughed uncertainly. "Run along now. I want to be alone. I hate scenes and emotions. Do get out, Barry. You're a fearful nuisance."

He obeyed gratefully, returning to his own rooms. Free. Free to love, he told

himself, free from any regret or remorse, free to find Naida. The night was like a half-forgotten dream already, but from his trunk he took the little embroidered, satin mule, and set it before him while he read over the message she had sent to him. She had come there for help and had found him gone. Evidently, from the hidden meaning of her words, she had found out where he was, at the Café l'Orient with the countess. Then Tom had opened the door, and with him she had seen Rosamond. The combination of the two revelations had sent her back where she had come from. If her visit had been from any impersonal motives, on any errand from Zaradi, she would not have been checked by pique or jealousy. He felt positive that she had come of her own volition, unknown to Zaradi, to throw herself on his protection.

A knock came on the outer door, and he threw slipper and letter under the trunk lid before answering it. A boy handed him a note which called for an answer, he said. Barry tore it open eagerly, but puzzled over the three lines it contained. It was not from her.

If your mission is to be successful, I must see you at once. I am in Lady Edenham's suite, expecting you. J. T.

"Say that I will come," he told the page.

He stepped back into the inner room to close the trunk. The key caught in the lock; it seemed to turn with difficulty; but after a second attempt it locked. Too nerved up to notice it particularly, Barry brushed back his hair, eyed his own face with much disapproval in the mirror, and speculated on the countess' methods.

Women invariably puzzled him with their intricate, roundabout strategy. That was one reason why Rosamond had attracted him: her sincerity and directness. Jacqueline Tavarin was beautiful, sophisticated, the kind of woman whose interest was a compliment to any

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man. But he hated petticoat diplomacy. So far, in his continental experience and at the Porte also, he had discovered the feminine principle amazingly predominant. Behind every man of importance and influence was the woman who ruled him, whose favor he lived to hold. The strongest bond was where there was no question of any love appeal. He resented the countess' interference in his affairs, her evident secret knowledge of all that lay behind his trip to Cairo. Yet he went to his appointment now with a feeling of adventure.

She was an extraordinary woman. Drake himself had admired her. Mantzon had frankly declared himself in love with her for years. Her close friendship with Lady Edenham gave her the final stamp of official sanction in the diplomatic set. And Barry mistrusted her instinctively. She had wealth, beauty, position, he argued. Why, then, should she choose to dabble around in this international game in the Near East unless she were some sort of secret agent? Her interest was too obvious to be wholly personal.

He went to the window opening on the iron balcony and leaned out, looking at the vines and garden below in the light of day. The green leaves were bruised and crushed at the sill, where feet had stepped on them. He broke off a couple and held them musingly—leaves her feet had trod upon. When he left the room to keep his engagement with the countess the half-faded leaves lay in his breast pocket. It was a tremendous relief to Barry to discover in himself a full response to romance.

CHAPTER VI.

Lady Edenham's Scotch maid admitted him to the large suite occupying the corner of the floor above his own modest two rooms and bath. For a moment as he crossed the threshold he was surprised. It was like stepping out of

Cairo into a cozy London morning room all in one minute. Gay, gray chintz with coral-and-green parrots on it covered the velvet couches and ottomans. The ornate brocade curtains had been replaced by ruffled net. Three lotus buds, half opened, floated in a Wedgewood bowl on the glass-topped table. An Irish terrier, shaggy, friendly, rose to greet him.

He did not hear the countess enter. When she spoke he was petting the terrier, lounging in the long window seat.

"Nice of you to come, Barry." She gave him an approving nod and smile. "I'm lazy this morning. Harriet had breakfast at some uncouth hour and went out walking. She's after unpolished emeralds for a girdle. Do you mind if I have my fruit and cocoa? Smoke over there and be indulgent. You were very much ruffled last night when you left me. Did you get a scolding?"

Barry noticed that she had not dressed the part for an early matutinal rendezvous. She was cool and fresh in Japanese white silk, heavy and simple in its lines, no cosmetics on her delicately flushed face.

"Do I look subdued?" he asked, smiling with baffling good humor.

"She's very lovely. Archer is quite mad about her. Reaction from too many Oriental interests, I imagine. He needs rebuffs to arouse him. What happened after you left me? Were you disturbed during the night?"

"Why?" He played with the terrier's ears lazily.

"Then you were." She leaned her elbows on the edge of the table, looking directly at him. "I'm going to be plain spoken with you, because you're too self-confident to understand hints. Ravensham is expected in Cairo by night, Harriet tells me. There is a very clever plot to get your Drake communication away from you, so that you cannot deliver it in time to have any effect on his conference here. This delay Islam will use to

her own advantage. England has tricked Egypt repeatedly; tricked Zoralyi Pasha, and he is in exile; tricked her own leaders by secret policies, so that they went blindly ahead like Lawrence in Arabia, winning the full confidence of the Arab leaders, and then finding themselves merely the tools of political cliques and secret treaties. England has played the Arabs against the Turks until your Anglo-Saxon is hated from the Caucasus to the farthestmost edge of the desert here. She fosters the Nationalist movement for her own ends, and Islam knows her guile. And she permits America to think it is umpiring the game."

"You're with the French, aren't you, countess?" he said, his face without revealing expression under her brilliant eyes.

"Yes, thank God," she breathed devoutly. "And we know how to manage these people. It is our right; we were here centuries ago, on the ground, before England realized what this gateway to the East meant. But you, Barry, you are young, you don't belong in this devilish mess of intrigue. I've watched you from the first. You're not like Mantzon and all his kind, not even like Drake. Can't you see the position you are in here? Drake had no right to send a boy like you. Before they will permit the delivery of your papers to Raversham, you will be killed."

Barry raised his head, listening. What she told him fitted in perfectly with Tom Hays' warnings and information on the extent of the Islam movement and its aims.

"Why is Raversham stopping over here?" he asked. "Why did he change his route?"

"My dear," she laughed, "if we all knew that, we might return to Constantinople to-day, quite satisfied. Oh, don't mistrust me, Barry. I want you to succeed, but I don't believe you have one chance in the world against this

linked chain that closes invisibly about those it wishes to hold. Keep away from Zaradi's caré. The girl Naida has been set to trap you. They will stage a lot of secret dangers, passionate encounters, fantastic peril. It is all merely part of the plan, I tell you, to discredit you and make you fail."

"How do you know all this?" he demanded suddenly. "I mean, how does it happen that you should have inside information on all this?"

"That is trustworthy, you mean?" A peculiar shadow stole into her eyes, sad, elusive. "You are quite justified in asking me that. And you will not take what I say at its face value. You suspect me of meddling. Perhaps I am." She leaned back her slender throat, smoking slowly, her blue eyes watching him unguardedly. "I'm terribly fond of you, Barry. With your usual cold-blooded self-absorption, you haven't even noticed it. And also, I want, as you say in America, to put one over on a woman whom I hate and despise. Not your little Naida, no, no. Zélie de Marigny, to whom the French envoy is devoted. You saw her last night. She is the most dangerous person in Egypt at this instant. She is a firebrand between England and France."

"What do you mean?" he asked, puzzled by her vehemence and earnestness. "I saw her last night. She's not young."

"No, she's not young," smiled the countess. "Around fifty. But she is Zélie de Marigny; that is enough. When she was young she led Paris by the ear; had it dancing for her like a trained baboon. She disappeared one night at the height of her popularity when she was singing at the Théâtre Comique. She was found months later in a villa on the Nile with a young British officer. He left her and returned to London. Seven years later she reappeared as the favorite of Fromelin. He was a go-between even then, a truckler, a betrayer of

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friendship, a man who advanced himself by having something on any man whom he wanted to do his bidding. This man does not rightly represent France. He undersells her continually for his own use, yet to-day he is the pivotal influence between France and Turkey, and he hates the English because Zélie de Marigny hates them. Are you learning from me, Barry?"

"I'd like to meet her. What puzzles me is where you got all this."

"Yes?" She raised fine, level brows in amusement. "You still suspect some devil's work here. My dear, I am thirty-four, a widow, by the kindly interference of an all-merciful Providence. Count Tavarin was seventy-two when he died, with most of his wealth tied up in France's Near East interests. He loved all this country. He disliked the English and Americans also, believing them to be always without vision or altruistic motives. He loved the small, oppressed countries, and gave of his wealth freely to aid them. After his death I came into full control of all he had owned, and I was an object of interest in international circles through my claims on the Mosul properties. I can assure you that I have entered into most intriguing situations the past year, and it amused me to play the game of wits with men like your Drake and with Raversham. Mantzon is too partizan ever to enjoy the proper perspective on events. He wants only results. He goes mad over what lies under the tip of his nose, and does not even see the wide horizons of to-morrow."

"You can see that?" Barry interrupted eagerly. "I mean to-morrow and all it stands for? It's what has rattled me since I came here, all this meddlesome mess. It seems as if Drake and even Raversham——"

"Especially Raversham," she said slowly. "He is a splendid man, honorable, fair, farsighted, but without sympathy or pity for any people who

are not English. You Americans are just as self-centered in your 'safety first' policy as the Nationalists are in their 'all or nothing' cry. They are all fighting to preserve a chimera; they make a parade of their favorite gods, just as they used to do here in Egypt—the sacred cow, the celestial cat, the divine crocodile. A man should have just as much right to his own religion as to his taste in love, but to-day, while they say it is commercialism that balks at fraternity, I say it is religions, the mutual hatred of one man for another man's gods. Barry, they will cut each other's throats until the very end."

She checked herself, pushed back her tray, and went to the window.

"Have you ever been far into the desert? It is perfect peace, golden glamour without end, an end of all this that we hate, Barry. It isn't worth while, tossing your splendid young life into this potpourri of head hunters. If you cared at all, I assure you I would not hesitate to go out yonder with you, if only to keep you safe from them."

He flushed quickly.

"You mean it isn't worth while getting jammed into some death trap over Raversham, for instance."

"What does it matter, really, whether Raversham knows America's stand in this, or not? He will wait for you, miss you, and go on to India. You know, I came here deliberately to try to stop you." She spoke softly, slowly, yet the rich, cultivated accent held his interest. "I made my friendship with Harriet an excuse to leave Constantinople when my presence was needed there at this crucial time. Mantzon is a friend of André Fromelin. I can prevent them going too far. But I came here to save you when I realized the plot to make you the goat, the sacrifice. Don't be a fool. Understand what I mean, Barry. I am willing to throw everything that I know into——"

The squat breakfast service of amber-

and-violet crystal held reflections of the room. Barry found himself eying it intently to avoid the direct appeal of her large, beautiful eyes, so uncompromising in their frankness. Her face had lost even its slight coloring as she talked to him; her nails pressed into the tender flesh of her pink palms.

"I can't do that," he said doggedly. "And I don't want, anyway, to run away and dodge. Even if it's as you say, that they all play with stacked decks and you haven't a chance, still it all narrows, with me, down to the personal equation. I gave Drake my word, and I'm going through with it until I hand his letter to Raversham."

"Then you should have been more careful of its previous disposal," she said presently, and laughed at him with a sudden reversal to humor. "You are deliciously comical, Barry. You have thrown me, Jacqueline Tavarin, over without even noticing my modest offer. So you shall go to the sacrifice, bedecked in floral necklets and with all customary ceremonials. Are you quite sure that you still have the letter?"

"Quite." He said it between his teeth, not daring to let her guess his own leaping fears at her suggestion.

"So? Lady Edenham left word with me that she expected you to meet her brother here informally at seven; a little dinner for a few of his friends whom it may help you to meet, men who know the Eastern situation. I hope you will come."

She smiled at him whimsically as she extended her hand, all her self-possession restored.

"You will find your way along the

diplomatic turnpike either very tumultuous or very victorious, Barry, and all through the women whom you overlook. We do not like that—to be overlooked. Still, Harriet insists that we are not nearly so important or necessary as we think we are. Why couldn't you have been comradely with me? You don't really dislike me, do you?"

"I think you are wonderful," Barry said earnestly. "And I'll never be able to thank you for all your kindness to me. Tell Lady Edenham I will surely be here to-night."

"Will you? Surely? Almost I am tempted to tell you the truth, Barry, to prevent your coming." She turned away from him and walked across the room to a stand where a crystal ball lay upon an incurved holder of silver like an up-lifted hand. Gazing into it with a slight, inscrutable smile on her lips, she hesitated, and then glanced up into his questioning eyes. "It is blurred. Before you came it was clear and beneficent. Barry, you blunder across my path like a wild comet. I don't believe, though, that you would know an orbit if you found one collared around your neck. Go ahead. You know the old Persian saying: 'He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; shun him.' I have said."

He thought that she looked suddenly tired and older as he took her hand in his. She withdrew it impulsively and laid both her own on his shoulders, her face uplifted to his as she seemed to let her gaze linger on each feature.

"Kiss me, my dear," she said quietly. "I shall never see you again. I am going away before they kill you."

TO BE CONTINUED.

FROM Australia comes a novel necklace made of thousands of beetles' legs. It is of great beauty and fairy lightness, and in color is a rich iridescent green, flashing bright shades of red and yellow when moved about under the light. Only one joint of the beetle's leg is used in making a link of the necklace. Similar necklaces are used as love tokens by the Solomon Islands natives.

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The Prey Master

By Warren E. Schutt

Author of "Assarian, Superman."



BELLAMY, waiting in his rooms at midnight for De Joncy to come, knew a slight *frisson* of dread. The request for the rendezvous had contained a peremptoriness that was a little sinister, a slight lack of civility which, for a man like De Joncy, whose subtleties meant everything, forcibly reminded Bellamy of his debt to the Frenchman. It was no small matter to be indebted to De Joncy. He had a way of making people pay through the nose. People knew that, yet they went to him, for he could do things which no one else could do.

There was the case of the Chilean minister. Sudden recollection of it, as he sat waiting for the midnight peal, gave Bellamy his shudder. In that case, De Joncy lobbied a French ministry into free nitrates and took no fee for it, until Romorsky, the Soviet agent, chanced to want the Chilean minister's wife; and she, subtly approached in the matter by De Joncy, with never a word to the minister, of course, in order to save her husband's good name as an upright diplomat and persona grata in Paris—well, so rumor had it, at any rate.

What, now, Bellamy was thinking, if the price due had to be paid through Allegra Daunt? It was that which gave him—and he was anything but a shivery sort—the passing tremor; that which, immediately afterward, too, made him smile with a set jaw. In the first place, the cases lacked parallelism. Allegra Daunt was not, after all, the Chilean minister's wife; nor was he, Ward Bellamy, attaché of the American embassy, if a minor one, the Chilean minister. Nor, again, could Bellamy think that De Joncy knew of that strong and splendid, if secret, bond, between himself and Allegra Daunt. And yet—again the dread persisted—there was De Joncy.

De Joncy made his living by knowing things worth knowing in the diplomatic set in Paris. Not a secret agent, or anything like it; a sort of prey master, holding an unique place among the international birds of prey. The physical dangers undoubtedly attendant upon such an out-and-out calling kept him from dabbling too deep. He was, in truth, no more than one of the most irreproachable members of that most élite social set of Paris. His man-

ners would have made him that, even if his ducal title did not; or, to put it another way, he was born into the set, and maintained his impregnable position by his manners. His title was his *cachet*, though he had nothing to show for it but an age-old parchment patent, his sole patrimony; a conscience of his own development, either remorseless or completely eradicated; unexampled gifts as an expert amorist, which he used only to advance his material interests. His keenest, personal interests, be it said, in womanhood flourished most in the smell of grease paint, and the dim light of the *coulisses*. For the rest, he was a man of thirty-five or six, of handsome face and stature, a great deal of an athlete himself, and an intrepid follower of sports. Such, briefly, was the man whom Bellamy admitted to his rooms promptly upon the first stroke of midnight.

The hour, the errand, De Joncy's appearance, as he stood back in the corridor away from the light of the opened door, as if to preserve from chance scrutiny the secret of his visit here, all tended again to give to the young man that vague sense of dread. The visitor was muffled in an evening cloak, although it was summer; he wore his hat low over his forehead in a manner strange to the Frenchman; there was something about his stick that made one think it held a rapier; all exaggerated, really, as if he were studying for some dramatic effect. It did, in fact, for a moment rather startle Bellamy.

The older man, upon entering, made a somewhat appraising scrutiny of the rooms, for this was the first time he had entered them. If this scrutiny was also a part of the studied effect, it did not further perturb Bellamy. In the first place, he was quite satisfied with everything in view; and, in the second, he did not overmuch care for his guest's opinion of his personal mode of living.

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Bellamy had dismissed his servant for the night and, while the duke was engaged in his scrutiny, threw open the buffet.

"Awfully good of you to let me come," De Joncy said at last.

"A somewhat unusual hour," was Bellamy's characteristically forthright reply.

"And a somewhat unusual mission."

"I gathered as much. Shall it be Scotch, or Irish—or, perhaps, a cordial?"

"A brandy, I think." He laughed a small, strained laugh. "I must, you see, screw up my courage for that which brings me here."

Bellamy wasn't fooled. The duke had other things than brandy behind his courage. Nevertheless, he poured a generous one, and shot seltzer into it, while his guest laid off his cloak and found a seat.

"Queer about poor old Assarian, wasn't it?"

The remark startled the younger man. For it was a direct reference to the favor which De Joncy had done for Bellamy. He wasn't going to let him overlook the debt. But the omniscience of the man was appalling. How could he have guessed the connection between the identity of Romorsky's inamorata—the establishment of which was the favor Bellamy had requested—and the bomb outrage which had destroyed Assarian's Turkish rug shop and killed its owner?

"Nothing especially queer about it," Bellamy parried coolly, "so far as I could make out. Assarian isn't the first secret agent to go out that way. Or is there something more behind it? You would know, if any one. I'd been hoping to get more details from you."

"I don't really know much about it," De Joncy lied with exquisite grace. "They say that Romorsky's little friend had something to do with it. And a woman was seen coming from As-

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sarian's shop almost simultaneously with the explosion. But I doubt whether it was she." His tone unmistakably said, he was very sure that woman was not the French actress.

And to Bellamy it spelled a worse doom than he had anticipated. "That woman" to whom De Joncy went out of his way to refer, was Allegra Daunt, though mischance and not purpose had placed her in Assarian's shop at the time of the bombing. And, with Assarian dead, who could make rebuttal of such circumstantial evidence? Bellamy, knowing that he was under his guest's minutest inspection, held himself well in hand; he would give him no advantage.

"The police," he said brazenly, "will probably find the other woman."

"The police," De Joncy retorted, "appear to have the enviable power to see or not to see, according to suggestions from above."

"You appear not to have overmuch respect for your own government."

De Joncy smiled.

"What is it you say in your language? 'Familiarity breeds contempt,' or something akin to that."

Veiled threats; subtle suggestions of his own power; deft manifestation of his omniscience in that regrettable affair that had enmeshed Bellamy and Allegra Daunt; all by way of preparation for—what?

And Bellamy, impatient at fencing, asked the direct question.

"I believe you said you had business with me. Let us get it done, and talk later."

"As you like. It is a most simple affair, just the tiniest favor, which I shall be glad to repay," De Joncy deprecated. "It is only this: there has lately come to Paris an American, a gentleman, a bookish, reserved, scholarly old man, who has a most engaging daughter. I am inordinarily fond of her. I wish it arranged so that I can

meet her when I will, without endangering her reputation. How to do it except by establishing her on my own social plane? That I cannot do, by myself, since the father refuses society. She is motherless. I would beg you to have Miss Daunt introduce her, sponsor her, protect her."

"But what have I to do with Miss Daunt?" Bellamy burst out, for he had hoped that the elderly gallant did not sully their close connection by too exact knowledge of it.

"Ah," said De Joncy, "that is a question which you and Miss Daunt can answer better than I."

"Extraordinary request," Bellamy continued. "How can I help you with Miss Daunt? Why not go to her yourself?"

But the other wasn't to be bluffed.

"As you prefer. I can do that."

Bellamy had to give ground.

"Why not go to the American ambassador's wife? She is the logical person to arrange this."

"But Miss Daunt, as you know, has an unexampled position in society here. She seems to have intrigued Paris by some sort of magic. Her cachet upon the girl would be far more valuable than that of the ambassador's wife."

Bellamy had no answer to that. He caught himself fencing with the heavy-lidded eyes, but turned his own away, lest he betray too much interest.

De Joncy prompted him, more gruffly this time:

"Besides, there are other reasons." Thus he cracked the whip over Bellamy with a warning that there was to be no fooling about it.

The young diplomat pondered a short second. A simple demand, yes. But the deft approach to it, the veiled threats, the crack of the whiplash at the end—ah, there was far more to it than appeared on the surface. And to bring Allegra into it! Bellamy's gorge rose in rebellion. De Joncy knew

it, and smiled; he waited patiently for the other to speak.

"I'll be glad enough to ask Miss Daunt about it the next time I see her," he said.

De Joncy rose abruptly.

"Thanks immensely. I'll come tomorrow night, at this time, to get your answer—or hers, rather."

So he departed, in all respects, to the last word, the victor. His muffled figure and measured step—Napoleonic—were eloquent of his sense of triumph.

The Duc de Joncy seemed to have been born with at least one form of universal knowledge: he never made error in his estimates of social values. Wanting, for his own reasons, that Jane Littleton be pushed in Parisian society, in that otherwise impregnable part of it that centered in the Quai d'Orsay, he could have hit upon no one more capable for his purpose than Allegra Daunt.

She had managed just that for herself, in the first place. She had come to Paris, unknown, a slim, well-poised, rather mature American girl, had set herself up alone in a small apartment not far from the Trocadero, and had obtained her first introduction to the diplomatic set through the American ambassador's wife. One gathered that back in Baltimore, which was her home city, she had been something of a friend of Ward Bellamy, a promising under-secretary of the embassy. But no one knew much about that, for she seemed to give him no preference more than she gave to the hundred others of her set, who were eager to pay her gallant court. Within four months of her introduction in that formal, or, rather, formless, fashion, she had managed to make herself one of the most sought-after women in the set.

Lovely and gracious, with an obvious background of breeding, such as many diplomats' wives could well envy, with an unending wardrobe in the most perfect taste, she moved among them,

aloof, yet amiably congenial with every one; zealously cultivated by women no less than by men, and equally respected by both sexes; faultlessly dignified without seeming to pose, maintaining somehow a superiority to them all, which not the proudest of them resented. All told, it was a most unusual position for an American woman to have attained. With her position, she could have taken—and De Joncy knew it, of course—the wife of a small-town alderman, and opened to her the most fastidious of doors. It was, perhaps, a case of "love me, love my dog;" but they all loved her too well to be captious about her following.

And Jane Littleton was better than either Bellamy or Allegra dared expect. She was twenty or so, unsophisticated and inexperienced, to be sure, but possessed of a fine, native sagacity and adaptability. Moreover, she assuredly had a background of culture, a poise gained by presiding over her father's household for several years.

Garnsey Littleton, a dark, handsome, lantern-jawed, scholarly man, had pursued the double vocation of lawyer and college professor in a small, mid-Western town. That past life had made the daughter a queer, rather provincial, lovable child, with the odd mixture of superficial sophistication and real innocence that one expects, nowadays, to find in an American girl, but which is incomprehensible to most foreigners.

And what of Littleton himself? Allegra and Bellamy found that an anxious question which yielded no solution, however much they sought one, when first they were faced with the necessity of carrying out De Joncy's commands. He had registered at the embassy, of course, to obtain his *permis de séjour*, and thus Bellamy got to know him. He vouchsafed the explanation that he had retired to France for a year or so, both to pick up the language himself, and to do some lit-

erary work, besides giving his daughter the cultural advantages of foreign residence. More than that there was no knowing; it was hard, indeed, to believe that there was more than that to be known, so typical was his case, so reserved his manner of living.

But—and Bellamy and Allegra always came back to this point when they discussed it—any stranger, in whom De Joncy was interested, was certain to be far more than he pretended to be. What, then, could Littleton be, who spent his days in his apartment, or the libraries, or walking the streets for exercise, or on short, out-of-town trips? What could he be, who had been no more than a small-town lawyer and college professor, and with a daughter so transparent as Jane?

The very innocuousness of it all seemed to portend an end worse, even, than had been the Assarian affair. It got on Bellamy's nerves when a month had passed, when Allegra had painstakingly and most successfully got Miss Littleton on the lists of every one worth while in Paris, when he was waiting, day by day and hour by hour, for the storm to burst, and nothing but too-placid and enervating calm came of it.

"Why don't you," he burst out finally to Allegra, on one of the rare occasions when she permitted him to see her alone, "why don't you chuck it all, dear, and clear out of it? You've really done enough. It's sure to mire you, sooner or later, and I can't endure it."

"De Joncy will have his pound of flesh, and we knew it when we asked him the favor," was Allegra's calm reply. "We—at least I—counted the cost then, and decided to pay it."

"But you don't know what you may have to pay. And haven't you done enough for him already? And why have you got to pay him? You can leave here, go back home——"

"You want me to?"

"Allegra, dear," was all Bellamy said.

"I go home, and leave you to face him?"

"Better that, than being mired yourself. It's portentous, this, portentous, I tell you. I'm afraid of it."

"You remember our bargain—that I was to help you for two years, Ward. And, if at the end of that time I could prove myself worthy of being your wife——"

"Allegra, dear," Bellamy broke in, but this time in a far different voice.

"And so," concluded Allegra, "I stay and see you through this. Otherwise I shall be unworthy of you. And besides," she added with a sentient smile, "I have a feeling that I should rather like to show De Joncy up for what he is and too long has been. I have a feeling that this is my time."

Bellamy surrendered.

"Your mind is immutable."

"As immutable as the rocks when I know what's best for you," she said with deep conviction.

That night, at the Brazilian minister's dinner, Allegra, for the first time, had to take cognizance of the affair that had been developing between Jane Littleton and Vagn Ericksen, the Danish tennis player.

That, in itself, was not an uncouth event. Ericksen was a handsome young viking, of a general culture exceptional for one of his caste and age, and of impeccable manners. Allegra knew him fairly well. He had, in fact, paid to Allegra rather over-diligent and earnest court, until she felt that, for his own sake, he had better know the uselessness of it. He was certainly no misfit in the society in which he moved; less so, even, than Jane Littleton. Allegra had never given him serious thought, one way or another.

But now his standing took on a new importance. How did he get into that society? The answer was not abstruse. Who else, of all that set, was a tennis enthusiast? None but the Duc de

Joncy. That identity of interests established, what mattered it that De Joncy and the Dane were, superficially, at least, pretty much at daggers drawn? Was this animosity not an indication of a deeper current in a different direction?

Thus Allegra found a point of attack, at least, if not something definite to work on. And Garnsey Littleton himself, Jane's father, added a hint to Allegra's fuller appreciation of the situation. He telephoned Allegra rather early in the morning following the dinner, requesting an appointment that afternoon, if convenient. Allegra was only too eager to make it convenient, and named two o'clock as her first free time.

Littleton was one of those rare men of whom one somehow draws the fancy that they live with their dead wives, rather than in the present. His thin, yet rugged, scholarly face was tense, as with a knowledge of things beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. On this afternoon that effect of gauntness was augmented, making the furrows deeper, and adding a grayish tinge to his dark skin. Allegra, with her keen intuition, saw in this an odd embarrassment that was not present at their first meeting; saw, as well, a constantly enforced will of concealment, of diffidence. His unconscious glance toward the open door of the small drawing-room as he re-seated himself after greeting her corroborated that impression. Allegra thought best to reassure him.

"You may talk quite freely."

That statement surprised him, or he acted marvelously.

"Thanks, but I have nothing to conceal," he tried unconvincingly to tell her.

"Of course not," Allegra agreed. "A confidence is not a concealment."

He read her carefully, thoughtfully. Why, she asked herself, this circuitous approach?

"Then you have guessed," he hazarded haltingly, "the object of my call."

"Not in the slightest, I give you my word. And I must confess to a more-than-usual curiosity about it."

He regarded her with a trace of suspicion, Allegra thought, but spoke with a resumption of urbanity.

"That, at least, may be very easily gratified. My daughter is in love. I should like to know with whom." He stopped there, as if by will, for it was apparent that he had intended to say more. He stared hard at Allegra. She saw the muscles of his throat and face twitch, as he pressed his finely cut lips together.

Allegra could not at once reply. It was no easy position. It was his right to know, but why did he not ask Jane about it? While she hesitated before betraying the girl he burst out, with a tremulous voice and rather pathetic rush of words, as if restraint were no longer possible:

"I know what you're thinking: that I, her father, should be the first to know it. And it hurts me—far more than you can imagine—that I do not know it. My daughter always has willingly confided—"

"But may I, please, ask," Allegra interrupted, "what gives you the impression that she is in love? You suggest that she hasn't told you. What, then—"

"Ah, you may well ask how I know. But the answer is plain. Since her mother died Jane has been wife and daughter to me. An unusual, an incredible bond of sympathy has grown up between us. She has come to be able to read, as well as could her mother, my thoughts and feelings before I utter them; and I can read hers, as well as I could her mother's. Is it possible, then?"—and here he shook his head in a regretful, negative sign—"that my little girl could hope to conceal from

me an emotion so violent as her first love affair?"

"But haven't you asked her? Surely, it is your right, your privilege——"

He straightened back in his chair. Words poised on his lips as if he could not give expression to them, and then they shot out:

"She denies it." It was incredible to him, and anathema.

The pathos of it gripped Allegra's throat and left her without words. This girl from a small, mid-Western town, out in the world for the first time, totally inexperienced, caught in the deliberately laid net of an infatuation strong enough, maddening enough, to make her deny her father, in spite of the closeness of life they had lived together. Vagn Ericksen was no inexperienced lover. Allegra herself had had experience of his capacities in that field of endeavor, and they were not mean. Jane Littleton, thrown continually with him, continually sought by him, could not be blamed. But what duplicity could he have practised upon her to avoid her confiding in her father? And why should he not want her to confide in her father, if it was an open-handed affair? Allegra knew that she was closing in on De Joncy. Now, if only she knew what Littleton's business was in Paris——

But again he was speaking, to bridge over an awkward silence.

"You can guess, Miss Daunt, what it has cost me to come to you. Is the cost to have been paid in vain? Am I to go away unrewarded for my pains? Surely you, a woman of your standing, have no reason to conceal——" He bent again the keenest scrutiny upon her.

"But she has told me nothing," Allegra declared, if with specious candor.

Littleton's eyes, after a space, said that he believed her.

"Can you find out for me?"

"I think so," said Allegra. "She

appears to consider me as rather a close friend."

"She worships you."

"And a girl is sometimes more likely to confide in a woman, than in a man. I shall be glad to approach the subject with her, at least. But I will tell you this, Mr. Littleton——" She paused, a purely dramatic pose, to give him space for the development of curiosity, to make her declaration more poignant.

"What?" he prompted her, wonder getting the better hand of him.

"I could manage the affair far better, if I knew what your mission in Paris is."

"What? What mission?"

"One understands that you are on a mission here."

Wonderful acting! Almost the man deceived Allegra.

"I? On a mission?" he asked with an exquisite blandness. "What sort of a mission? I do not understand." That much he would not confess.

"Oh, please don't think again about it," Allegra returned. "It was only a shot of mine into the dark, you might say. I thought that, if you were, by chance, engaged on some secret mission, there might be some explanation for your daughter's unusual behavior."

Littleton's hands tightened upon the arm of his chair, and he stared at Allegra.

"And if I were on a secret mission," he said, trying to speak humorously, and failing, "if I were, what could Jane's being in love have to do with it?"

"Ah," said Allegra, "now I see that you are on a mission here."

"Pardon me, Miss Daunt, but——"

"And a man of your sort would not engage himself in any sort of dishonorable mission."

"Pardon me, but not even to the ambassador himself——"

"And so it is a mission for America. I thought so."

"You—you amaze me, confuse me.

You are drawing conclusions unjustified by anything I have said."

"I do sympathize with you, Mr. Littleton. It is a most difficult position for a man like you to be in—a man who cannot lie. But you must accept the fact that in certain, untrustworthy quarters of Paris it is known that you are here on a mission.

"Impossible. How could it be known? Not even the American ambassador himself knows it."

"A mission direct from the president?" Allegra hazarded.

Littleton nodded reluctantly.

"I see you trust me, at last?" she said with a smile.

"I may as well, may I not? Who are these people who know?"

"Far more ruthless than you; far more intelligent, in their own way, than you. You would be powerless against them."

His eyes doubted, but Allegra's conviction was too firm to be beaten down by a doubting glance. What chance had this high-spirited man, whose life had been honor personified, against the totality of De Jency's unscrupulousness? Littleton had to accept her statement as cold fact, and took another tack.

"And you think this affair of Jane's has something to do with it?" he asked.

"I'm almost certain of it. For no other reason would she act as she has done."

Again Littleton's fine head shook in that regretful negative, based on incredulity.

"But she knows nothing about it. She does not know that I am here on any other mission than to show her the world."

"I really don't know the details. A woman rarely does, rarely needs."

"You are right, Miss Daunt. I remember my wife—but no matter about that." A space of silence ensued, and then he asked dully: "Well, what's to be done about it?"

"You must tell me what your mission is, Mr. Littleton. Once I know that, I can be of some assistance. Without that, I should be merely working undirected, in the blankest darkness. I give you my word that no one, not even the American ambassador, shall hear of it through me."

"Your word is not necessary. I know you now. But it must be a secret, or I shall be breaking faith."

"Then you will tell me?"

"Yes."

And thus Allegra came to know what most she needed to know.

The Duc de Jency had a wholesome respect for Allegra Daunt, an awe for her abilities that amounted almost to superstition, and was exceeded only by his awe for his own greater infallibility. Learning that Littleton had called upon Allegra on an errand, the identity of which was anything but clear, De Jency resolved to take no chances on Allegra's future activities. He knew where Allegra's sympathies would lie. Hence, before Littleton had reached his suite after leaving Allegra's apartment, De Jency called the Dane to the earliest possible rendezvous; and while, perforce, he awaited that, made a third call on Bellamy, quite openly at the offices of the embassy.

He found rather a grim pleasure in the fact that the embassy was already closed for the day. Both to himself and to Bellamy, it was significant of his control of the situation, that Bellamy^o couldn't avoid seeing him. The porter of the embassy was doubtful, when he took De Jency's card through the little opening in the great gates; but De Jency never was doubtful, and was even pleased at the alacrity with which Bellamy's summons came back to him. He rather circumspectly shut behind him the door of the private office as he entered. Bellamy, at his desk over a pile of work, greeted him castrally.

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"Awfully good of you to see me now, Bellamy," De Joncy said with characteristic urbanity. "Do go ahead with whatever you're doing. I can talk as you write; you have nothing to do but listen to me."

"Thanks," said Bellamy, continuing.

"I came, in the first place, to thank you for the way in which Miss Daunt has assisted Miss Littleton," De Joncy said, seating himself with impudent familiarity on the edge of the desk.

Bellamy made an unconscious movement to conceal the papers he was signing, a gesture entirely unconscious, unnecessary, because they were of the most routine nature, yet a gesture illuminative of his opinion of his visitor.

"I shall be pleased to convey to her your gratitude," he said, with a formality strange to his characteristic frankness.

"Do, please. And, while you are on the subject, would you mind telling her"—here his voice grew steely—"that her activities in the matter are to be strictly delimited by the execution of my original request."

"Meaning?" said Bellamy incisively.

"Meaning," the other explained, "that she is to exert herself in no other manner, either for Miss Littleton or for her father, than the mere fostering of Miss Littleton's position in society. She is to continue that, but—nothing else. Nothing else. *Rien de plus.*"

"There's something of a threat in that," Bellamy said, meeting the Frenchman's eyes, for the first time, in combat.

"There is meant to be."

"You are playing your cards openly, for a change."

"As always."

"And the sanction for the threat?"

"As if I had to tell you that, Bellamy. The Assarian affair, of course."

Bellamy continued to scrawl his signature. De Joncy waited. After such a space, Bellamy spoke.

"Did you want anything else, De Joncy?"

"Nothing else, thanks."

Bellamy touched a bell. The porter limped in. De Joncy, obedient to Bellamy's gesture, followed the porter out. But after he had gone, the young man lost all interest in his papers. After pacing the floor for uneasy minutes, he got Allegra on the telephone and made an immediate engagement to see her. De Joncy, he felt sure, would know, but there was no time now for precautions.

De Joncy proceeded straight to the Sports Club, in a private room of which he found, awaiting him, Vagn Ericksen, one of Denmark's international tennis men, a massive, yet somehow graceful, and imperturbable blond, whose name, on the Riviera, had been publicly linked with a world-famous actress, and with one of England's proudest duchesses.

"You've rather overplayed your part, I'm afraid, Ericksen," De Joncy introduced his subject.

"The girl is mine when I want her." The Dane yawned.

"Too much so, and too soon. The father has smelled a rat, and has been to *la reine Américaine* about it."

"What happened?"

"I don't know, of course. But it's a danger signal."

"What do you propose doing about it?"

"I've just come from seeing Bellamy. I told him——"

"But why him? Why not Miss Daunt herself?"

"Simpleton. Miss Daunt would laugh me in the face. But Bellamy she loves, and undoubtedly will do as he commands her."

"That was a clever touch," Ericksen commented. "Trust you, old man. But I don't understand. What did you say to him?"

"I told him, practically, that I could inform the police that she was seen

running away from Assarian's shop the night of that bomb outrage, which is still a police mystery; but that she could save herself, if she went no further in the Littleton affair. That means that she will keep her hands off it."

"Does it mean that? Miss Daunt is a woman of some spirit."

"In this case, it does. It's a trial marriage between her and Bellamy, or something like that."

"How did you know?"

"Through the social secretary of the ambassador's wife. I flattered her to idiocy. She'd have stolen the private code for me. She knew all the facts about Bellamy and *la reine Américaine*. Miss Daunt, before she will marry Bellamy, wishes to prove her ability to help the American in his career. If she fails, she will not marry him; and she loves him. So, you see, we are safe. If I go to the police with the story of her being mixed up in that Assarian bombing—and she knows I will, if she fails me—she is ruined forever as the wife of a diplomat. No court, henceforth, would receive her. Her husband would be persona non grata in any capital. She can do nothing but accede to my request. Bellamy will make her see that plainly enough. So we are safe from any interference by her. Both she and Bellamy know they can trust me, so long as they keep within the limits I have set for her activity."

"Clever scoundrel that you are, De Joncy."

"At the same time, we take no chances," De Joncy went on. "It is time, now, to clinch matters. Could it be arranged for to-morrow afternoon, say?"

"Perfectly; my end of it."

"So be it, if I can get hold of Littleton. At three, I think. Yes, call it three. Littleton won't refuse me any appointment I request, unless he chances to be out of town."

"What sort of a woman did you get to play the maternal? One not too obviously otherwise, I hope. Miss Jane is very wise, very discerning, for a youngster."

"I make no mistakes, Ericksen. Three o'clock it is."

Three o'clock the next day found Garnsey Littleton facing the Duc de Joncy across the small table of his hotel sitting room. There was in Littleton's eyes no more than curious question, for De Joncy, in requesting the interview, had guarded his motive.

"I came to see you, sir," he introduced himself, "primarily about your daughter; secondarily, about——"

But Littleton interrupted with a pathetic eagerness plainly indicative of what most was on his mind.

"Oh, are you the man with whom she has fallen in love?"

De Joncy shook his head sadly.

"Unfortunately, no."

"Unfortunately, you say?"

"Yes. Where is she now, by the way?"

"Out. I don't know. With Miss Daunt, perhaps. I think she said——"

De Joncy interrupted this time.

"You know she's not with Miss Daunt."

"You've come to me about her? You know where she is? That she's—she's——"

"At this moment she happens to be in a position most regrettable for a young, unmarried girl, of position and parentage such as hers."

Littleton was instantly livid.

"What do you mean? Tell me."

"It's possible, isn't it, that we can make a mutually satisfactory exchange of information?"

De Joncy almost quailed under Littleton's eyes.

"So that's it," Littleton said quietly.

"I had feared it."

"Nothing to fear, really. It's alto-

gether simple. Your daughter need not be smirched."

"Your proposition, please?"

"One understands that you are here in France for the purpose of conducting secret investigations, and making a confidential report to your president."

"How did you know?"

"Is that to the point?" De Joncy, who had been standing apart from the old man, now came over and took his usual, characteristic attitude, sitting on the edge of the table upon which the other man leaned. Littleton backed away from him.

"No," he said, shaking his head slightly; "it's not to the point."

"Then why waste time? That report you are making happens to be of value to—certain persons in Paris. It is a trap—has been. I grant that. But not so serious a trap as you may imagine. I give you my word there will be no action on the report. No one, least of all your president, need ever know that you have given me advance information of it."

"But it's confidential—confidential, man."

"'Confidential' is a most elastic word," De Joncy suggested.

"Not with me, sir."

"Perhaps your daughter might help you change your mind."

"What of her?"

"At this moment she is in the apartment of a married man, under circumstances not the most innocent." Here De Joncy looked at his watch. "In twelve minutes, precisely, the man's wife will demand admission to the apartment. Need I paint to you any further picture of scandal and divorce proceedings for her—your daughter?"

Littleton clasped his hands behind his back and, with sagging shoulders, walked a few steps up and down the room. De Joncy was impatient of response. These cool, self-possessed Americans he wasn't quite used to. The

man was suffering deeply. He could see that. But why wasn't there an outburst, a torrent of invective, such as his Gallic intuitions led him to expect? It was all rather trying, especially when the old man's sagging shoulders trembled.

"It's such a simple affair," the duke said, to relieve the tenseness. "There should be no hesitation on your part."

"You mean," Littleton said, turning sharply, "that if I give you the substance, the policy, perhaps, of my report, that you will warn my daughter, so that she can get away in time?"

"Not quite so simple as that, I am afraid. I could not afford to take such a chance on your changing your report, once pressure is removed from you. We must have some permanent guarantee. Your daughter must be found by the wife. But the wife will institute no divorce proceedings, create no scandal, so long as you give me a true report of your mission here—the report, that is, which subsequent policy by your government proves was the real report."

"You are clever, sir."

"Moreover, the man, with whom she is, is not altogether unscrupulous. Your daughter will come to no harm, unless it transpires that the report you give me is not the report you make to your president. Then—divorce and scandal. Can your daughter—can you—live it down?"

Again Littleton walked the floor, only a step or two up and back. And again he stopped before his tormentor.

"Your secret sources of information, sir, were to the effect that mine was a confidential mission, n'est-ce pas?"

"Yes," said De Joncy, a little blandly.

"Your information, sir, upon the point was right. My report is confidential to myself and the president."

"But—you—you forgot your daughter—"

Littleton nodded.

"Yes. It is exactly that which I have

decided to do—forget her. There is no choice."

"What? Is inhumanity a trait of Americans?"

"I myself wonder."

De Joncy was more and more amazed.

"Is that your final word?"

Littleton nodded, walking toward the door.

"My final word, sir."

He opened the door. The duke, still hesitating, but still impelled by some force greater than himself to go, left the room. But hope died hard. The biggest stakes he had yet had the fortune to play for were not so easily to be surrendered. Even as the door was closing behind him, he spoke again to Littleton:

"The affair is not yet finished. If, at any time before you submit your report, you care to give me advance information, the scandal and divorce——"

The door was closed upon the rest of his sentence. Still hoping, he rang for the elevator, and descended, hoping. In the hotel lobby, before he passed into the street, Ward Bellamy, tense and haggard, intercepted him. Here, at least, was satisfaction for De Joncy. Bellamy didn't underestimate the cost of failure. Bellamy and Allegra might yet serve as cat's-paws. Odd that he should be here, but opportune, none the less. Bellamy wasn't even waiting for another person, for he came straight to De Joncy, and without hesitation explained himself.

"I saw you come in, and took the liberty of waiting for you. They told me at the desk that you were with an American. Littleton, I suppose."

"You appear to be rather anxious about it."

"And why not, under the circumstances? You've guessed how much it means to me. What luck?"

"None the best. But there's hope."

"Excellent," said Bellamy with relief.

"Miss Daunt wanted me to find you, and

beg you to come to her apartment at four o'clock this afternoon. She is staying in for it."

De Joncy smiled to himself. They were frightened, the pair of them; falling over themselves to help. Invaluable as allies they might yet be.

"I shall be delighted. At four, promptly. *Mon dieu*, but there's only time to get there, now."

"I know. Sorry, but I wasted rather a lot of time looking for you."

De Joncy hurried on, eager to see what advantage he might derive from this new move of theirs.

He was rather pleased with himself as he entered Allegra's apartment. Hers was a proud spirit, and to have beaten it into surrender was an achievement in which any man could find a sweet satisfaction. The Littleton affair was not yet, by any means, closed; already he was making plans how he might use Allegra to make Littleton bow his head. And this slight exaltation of mood, that came from his sense of domination over her, made him expansive enough to appreciate to the full the splendid loveliness of her, as she came into the room where he waited. If only his natural tastes were a little higher, would it not be a worthy task to set about winning her, if only for the self-satisfaction of it?

She was dressed to go out to some tea or reception or other affair. The very fact that she wore a hat added a definite note of coolness toward him, of aloofness; and yet he found more satisfaction in that very coolness. It was all a pose of hers, he assured himself, assumed to give herself the air of nonchalance, to stamp the present affair as a mere passing incident, and so all the more easily to be dealt with. In reality, she was, without doubt, writhing under the suspense. All this pleased De Joncy; all this made him the more certain that she was a ready tool to his hand.

"It was good of you to come so promptly," Allegra began. "I must be rushing off soon, but I thought I might manage to accomplish something in these few minutes."

"An unexpected summons, and so the more delightful, mademoiselle."

Allegra lifted her eyebrows at that.

"Unexpected? After the infinite pains you've taken to intrigue me with this affair of the Littletons'?"

"But I thought that Bellamy had made it plain to you what I wished you to do."

"But you told him nothing."

"All, at least." De Joncy returned imperturbably, "that it was necessary for you to know."

Allegra calmly overlooked that statement.

"I even had Mr. Littleton himself here, to try to find out if there could be any secret about him."

De Joncy smiled faintly. Small chance of her having got much from Littleton.

"And did you learn anything?"

"Nothing of consequence, except that he is here on a secret mission for our president."

"You learned that?"

"Yes. But, oddly enough, the *ministre des affaires étrangères* knows nothing of it. Nor does he know that you are interested. That seems very queer to me."

"You haven't been to him? And mentioned my name as connected with it?" gasped De Joncy.

"But I had to know before I could continue with it, especially since my own country is plainly involved."

"But what folly to have gone to him! You could have come to me. If you are sincerely interested in helping me, I would have told you."

"You were so secretive and obscure about it all," Allegra protested with a pretty moue of feigned despair. "But it's not too late to tell me now, is it?"

"No, not if you care to throw your lot in with me. It is nothing that can harm your country."

"May I judge that for myself?" asked Allegra.

"Certainly. Mr. Littleton is here in France to gather for your president first-hand information concerning the attitude of the French populace toward our occupation of the Ruhr. That secret report your President will use as a guide to determine his policy—whether he shall favor the French or the Germans in the matter. It can, in no way, harm your country."

"Information of that sort would be most valuable to France, would it not, monsieur le duc?"

"To either France or Germany," De Joncy admitted readily.

"And you, of course, are trying to get advance knowledge of the report in order to turn it over to your government, as a matter of patriotism?" Allegra asked pointedly.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Of course," Allegra replied. "You would be a traitor, both at heart and before your laws, if you did anything else. The penalty for that is—still, it is useless for me to remind you of it."

De Joncy managed a disingenuous smile.

"Useless, and not at all to the point."

"One more question, before I can go any further in this matter with you. Exactly what connection is there between you and Vagn Ericksen?"

De Joncy did not answer as promptly as, heretofore, he had done. He was beginning a little to mistrust the trend of the conversation. Had his eagerness, his assurance that Allegra wished to help him, led him a little too far? He resolved to be more prudent.

"No connection—in this affair," he replied, with an implication that, as a saving grace, admitted that they might be connected on other matters. For this high-spirited woman might have

a fundamental objection to helping him in what amounted to treason.

"No connection?" she repeated questioningly.

"None whatever. What gave you the notion——"

She interrupted him by rising and going to a closed door at the side of the room opposite him. She opened it, and stood for a second looking back at De Joncy. Then Jane Littleton appeared at her side. In an instant De Joncy was on his feet.

"She—here?"

"Yes. She's been here all the afternoon. She came here, instead of going to Erickson."

"Then her father knew?"

"No, her father did not know, and does not yet know. I wanted to make sure of getting you here before he should know. But, if Vagn Ericksen has no connection with you——"

"You are going too far, mademoiselle. I warned you what would happen——"

Allegra's interruption broke off his speech.

"She came here, because I warned her what Ericksen is. The police raided his apartment at three this afternoon, and found indisputable proof that he is, in secret, a German agent. And you admit your connection with him in this affair. In other words, you are a self-confessed traitor to your government."

"Fine words, and a fine conclusion," De Joncy said in that steely voice of his. "But you cannot save yourself by it. Your testimony will have no weight in the courts of France, and, as for this young girl's—poof! Beside my word!"

"Eh bien," Allegra said, and suggested to the girl that she withdraw

again into the seclusion of the next room.

"I warned you, mademoiselle, that, if you interfered with me in this affair, I would turn you over to the police for too full knowledge of that bombing outrage. And now I go to do it." He turned toward the door.

"Not at all necessary to go to do it, monsieur le duc," said Allegra. "The *chef de sûreté* is here, in my apartment; likewise an underminister of justice. You may make your complaint against me direct to him."

De Joncy stopped short.

"Here?" he echoed. "They've heard my confession?"

The appearance beside Allegra of a dapper, plump little man in familiar uniform gave De Joncy all the answer he needed. He was, in very fact, a self-confessed traitor to France. He wrenched open the door into the hall, and would have run away. But the clank of sabers there drove him back. It was no part of Allegra's plan to give him a chance to escape, and the chief of police had looked out for extra guards. Recoiling from them, as before an unscalable wall, De Joncy turned and ran down the hall of the apartment in the opposite direction. Allegra saw him flit past the door of the drawing-room. Then came the crash of another door; a desperate curse; and, like an echo to the curse, the deafening explosion of a revolver. Allegra caught the eye of the underminister as both officials started toward the rear of her apartment, to ascertain that which already they knew.

"He's taken the best way out," exclaimed the underminister.

"And so," said Allegra, "receives payment for all debts owing him."

DEVOTEES of golf, not content with pursuing the little white ball all day, have begun to play the game by moonlight. That there are only three or four full moons in the course of a summer does not discourage them.



The Plunderers

By Winston Bouvé

Author of "Midas' Daughter,"
"The Left Hand of Luck," etc.



VI.—THE SHADOW

THE wedding had been as nearly perfect as such mortal occasions may be, Dru thought as she made her way through the crowded Durant grounds to a certain secluded spot. Which meant that the Durants, their servants, and she, Drusilla Carstairs, who, as maid of honor, had been of infinitely more importance than her brother, the bridegroom, were in a state of nervous exhaustion.

It was a satisfaction to remember the theatrical loveliness of the Durant drawing-room, embowered for the ceremony, the equally theatrical loveliness of Dolly, in her period gown and Duchess lace, descending the staircase on her father's arm, and her brother's poise as he waited for his bride.

Lorry had looked so handsome, so distinguished, beside his pudgy, convivial father-in-law. She refused to let herself dwell on the contrast, for the Durants were dear people, and they had smoothed the path of Dolly and her new husband by presenting them with a charming Westchester house, and settling an allowance for personal expenditures upon her. Nominally, she would live on Lorry's not altogether adequate income; practically, they would both be spared the petty economies that neither of them had ever practiced, as well as the pangs of dependence.

Drusilla, finding the stone seat she

had sought at the foot of the garden, dropped upon it with a sigh of relief. Undoubtedly the Durants had been wise. Dolly and Lorry were madly in love now, but how long would their ardor last under the pricks of poverty? Dru's charming, purely molded face, with lips that could be scornful, lids that drooped with a certain weary, worldly wisdom over the inscrutable blue of her eyes, set in a mold that one day might harden if life were not kind to her. It was Alden Griggs, Lorry's employer and her friend, who had absurd ideas about the spiritual value of poverty. No one knew better than she that there was none. Poverty was the most degrading thing that could happen to any one. People who knew nothing about it liked to think of it as an ennobling influence. It was anything but that. It was the motive of most wholly selfish deeds, of trickery and chicanery, of—

The slanting, afternoon sun came out from its October haze, made her gown a golden glory, her dark hair as sheenful as the breast of a bird. But it was not the westerling light that softened her, magnetized her mysteriously as to lips and eyes and lifted head. A dark figure, clearly silhouetted against the sky, paused on the terrace, approached her.

She drew aside her saffron skirts to make room for him, welcome shining under her black lashes.

"My responsibilities are over," Alden Griggs told her amusedly, dusting some ill-aimed confetti from his shoulders. "The ceremony went through without a hitch; I remembered all the things incumbent upon a best man to remember at the proper time; and I looked Lorry over meticulously before I let him go. He has his wallet, his baggage checks, his train tickets. I'm a free man again—or almost. At the last moment Lorry confidingly announced that I was to pick up some old brasses for the living-hall fireplace. He wants the house ready when they get back, and I gather that he is a little doubtful about papa Durant's taste."

Drusilla was reproachful.

"Why do you let him impose upon you, Alden? I'll get the brasses, of course. And as to Mr. Durant's taste"—her most engaging dimple displayed itself and retired—"the champagne couldn't have been improved upon, and as for the salads—"

Her slim fingers, wafting mock ecstasy in his direction, were caught in his.

"Incorrigible materialist!" He chuckled. "You've already contributed more than your share of labor toward the new establishment. Haven't you helped choose furnishings, matched silks and cretonnes, directed paper hangers and the rest of their tribe, until you've grown thin under it? You're looking anything but your old self, Dru."

He retained her small hand, considering its delicate bones, its blue-veined whiteness, as dispassionately as if it had been a bit of white jade.

She spread out the warm, yellow splendor of her bridesmaid's frock, tilted her impudent chin.

"I'm looking—rather irresistible, if you only knew it," she sighed.

"You're tired out. Perhaps it's something more than that. Does this marriage of Lorry's really please you, Dru?"

His gray eyes were very gentle.

"It pleases me to have Lorry happy," she told him honestly. "And it's what you call a genuine love match. I'm sure of that. But—I can't pretend that it's easy to give him up. It isn't. He's all I've got, and I want the old days back again—horribly. The apartment is going to be deadly without him and his belongings. I'm lonelier than I ever thought I could be!"

It was difficult to explain, even to Alden, that Lorry was her life, that no other man had meant much to her since Jason Meade, whom she had been about to marry, had proved faithless, like that other Jason who had wooed his Medea only because she could lead him to the Golden Fléce.

"You—lonely!"

Quite clearly it was hard for him to believe that, and with good cause. Dru Carstairs, with her beauty, her charm, and her cleverness, was immeasurably popular, poor though she was. And somehow—Griggs slurred over the ways and means—she always managed to be as smartly gowned as her rich friends, to play with them at their expensive follies. She was no satellite, but a centrifugal force in herself. And she earned her way, certainly. He hated himself for wondering just how she did it. There were others, though, who wondered, too. He had heard Dru's name mentioned at his club the other night, coupled with that of Paxton Weyland, his partner. Her brief engagement to the man had leaked out, was the topic of interest. Why, young Hastings, a blond wag with a careless tongue, had wondered, had it been of such brief duration? Had the old boy heard of her being mixed up in one or two odd affairs? Oh, nothing derogatory to her; just matters of money unofficially earned. Some one else had chuckled and said:

"It's all in the game, Tim. Ladies must live. Why not by polite plunder? And if she were a typist in your office,

say, your sister and my wife wouldn't include her in their dinner lists. Not because she was a typist; merely because she wouldn't be Dru any longer."

Nothing tangible; just something to be remembered, to wince at.

"I, lonely?" her lovely voice repeated in parrotlike mockery. "I admit it, Alden. I'm not always dining out, or dancing, or bridging. Sometimes"—her blue-gray eyes shadowed swiftly—"I'm balancing my check book, or wondering how I can make it balance before the first of the month!"

Pathos, a rare thing with her, sat well upon her. Just now the droop of her soft mouth, the inflection of her voice, matched the magnolia pallor of her skin, the bister shadows beneath her eyes. She looked smaller, frailer, than ever before.

Griggs, still holding her hand, saw all this. He was aware of the coming to pass of the thing that had been the beauty and the blight of the last three years, the years that he had known Dru-silla and fought against her overwhelming charm with the blind, deliberate stubbornness that was at once the strength and the weakness of his nature. It could be put off, fought against no longer.

"Marry me, and let me take you away from the loneliness, the struggles with the check book, Dru!" was what he said.

She stared at him in unfeigned amazement. And, although her eyes were very soft, a note of laughter, like a bubble, escaped her lips.

"Alden! You're the most absurd of Galahads, my dear. I might so easily accept you. With an income like yours, to say nothing of your own irresistible charms, not another woman you know would turn you down. Digest that advice before you imperil yourself again!"

"I'm serious, Dru. Once more—will you marry me?"

The gayety died from her lips and eyes, leaving her young, wistful and de-

fenseless, he saw with a rush of tenderness.

"Because you're sorry for me? I'm rather nice when I'm pathetic, but it won't last, you know."

He shook his head.

"Because I find that I can't live without you. Because——" His lips, seeking hers hungrily as he swept her to him, finished the sentence in another fashion, but adequately enough.

She was riotous with color when she drew away from him, color that she tried to hide with slim, embarrassed hands.

"You love me!" he told her and himself with an amazed delight that touched her more than anything he could have said, and would have taken her into his arms again.

"Wait!" she commanded almost harshly. "Perhaps I do. No, you mustn't touch me, Alden. Listen to me, instead. I'm afraid I do love you, and since I do——" Her hands moved lightly. "The queer part of it all is that you should love me. You've never approved of me, since the first time you saw me, in Capri."

"Where you were parading around with a princeling whose affairs were legion," he reminded her; "to the disgust and anxiety of his guardians. You got yourself well talked about that winter!"

Her laughter rippled out.

"It was delicious! But that's it, Alden. Ever since then I've been doing the same sort of thing, outraging the proprieties right and left. Oh, I've never been very outrageous, but that isn't the point. It's what people say I've been that matters. And I daresay there are a good many versions of me by now. I've had to live, Alden, since everything was swept away; and I've lived by my wits. You've heard that, naturally. You see, you wince! It's a plundering world, and I've taken my share by irregular methods, I suppose. Yet I can

face you and tell you that, according to my own code, I've done nothing dishonorable."

It was his eyes that dropped before her steady gaze.

"Don't plead your case!" His voice was sharp. "Don't you think I know you too well to ask for explanations?"

"I think you prefer not to face them," she told him with gentle irony. "And, as long as you do that, there'll always be a shadow of doubt in your mind. I don't like shadows, Alden. They're too intangible; give you nothing to fight against. You can destroy the substance, but never the shadow."

Her wistful gaze drew his like a magnet.

"Doubt of you? Never! And as for shadows, you're too bright ever to be dimmed by anything, my dear!"

She moved, catching an abrupt breath. For, as he spoke, the ground at their feet was darkened, and a woman appeared in the lee of the high hedge to their right. She was not young; her plump figure, incased in an elaborate frock of youthful design, was that of a woman in her late forties. But she waved her bare arm with its jingling bracelets like a schoolgirl, and her face, incredibly round and immature under its pink powder, was framed in reddish curls that owed their hue to henna. Once she had been an exquisite doll, and she had clung to that early phase of her beauty with more tenacity than discretion.

This was Clare Griggs, Alden's stepmother, who, since his father's death, had been the burden of Alden's life, Drusilla suspected. One of the nicest things about Alden was his kindness to the obscure, common little actress who had married his father three years before the old man's death. With unfailing tact and courtesy he had not only accepted her presence in the Thirty-sixth Street home, but, finding her guarded, hostile, rather pitifully afraid of him,

8—Ains.

had gone out of his way to make her feel that he was her friend.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," she told him petulantly. "We must get back to town early, Alden. I'm playing bridge at the Hendersons' to-night."

"I'm sorry, Clare." His eyes were contrite as he looked from her to Drusilla, with whom they pleaded.

She understood. Yes, irritating though she was, Clare Griggs was a creature of pathos, as she stood there in her ill-chosen blue frock of a season or two back. Why, she wondered, was she always so badly dressed? It was known that Malvin Griggs had, unfairly enough, left everything to Alden. But it was also known that, as mistress of Alden's house, Clare Griggs had everything she wanted: her maid, her own car, accounts at the best shops, as well as her ample allowance.

"We'll take Miss Carstairs—Drusilla—home with us." He turned to the girl. "Let me tell her, Dru! You must be the first to know, Clare, that she is going to marry me."

The bridge was burned. But Drusilla was conscious only of her own throbbing delight, and then of the look of intense apprehension that scudded across the older woman's face. Her shallow blue eyes, as chilly as china, and as depthless, fastened upon the girl, and Dru saw the frightened antagonism in them. It was natural enough that it should exist, she supposed. After all, her stepson's marriage would oust her from her position as mistress of the Murray Hill home. But she might have concealed it more adroitly.

"I hope you'll both be very happy," she told them slowly.

They got away at last from the Durant place and the wedding aftermath. As they rolled down the driveway Dru remembered that this was the dreaded hour when she had expected the full realization of Lorry's loss to sweep over

her. Instead, she was happier than she had ever been in her life, and even Lorry had no place in her happiness.

Not even Clare Grigg's presence could dim the brightness of that evening, nor the fact of Alden's having to hurry off to a directors' meeting that could not be neglected. Yet, though he and Dru faced each other over the late, indifferent meal in the shy, delicious intimacy of the newly engaged, it was a difficult hour. Clare talked incessantly, but not until the meal was ended did she reach the point of her chatter.

"Have you set the date of your wedding, Drusilla?"

"Make it soon," begged Alden. "There's no need for a long engagement, surely. A December wedding, and six weeks South!"

Being Drusilla, she did not demur lengthily, to capitulate at last.

"Not a wedding at all, Alden. Frankly, I can't afford it, and I'd really prefer being married *sans fanfare*, if you don't mind."

"As if a man ever wanted to make a Roman holiday of the occasion!" Alden laughed.

Mrs. Griggs rose.

"If you are going with me to the Hendersons', Dru, you'd better run upstairs and get ready."

"My wrap's in the reception room," the girl reminded her.

It seemed absurd, but Drusilla was almost sure that Alden's stepmother wanted to be rid of her for a space. A moment later it didn't seem absurd at all. For Clare, twisting the amber beads she wore, addressed Alden nervously.

"Sorry to bother you, Alden, but I've run low on cash this month. Will you give me a check? Better make it fifteen hundred."

He looked at her in some surprise, started to speak, and, as if he thought better of it, merely preceded them into the library.

"Bridge debts again, Clare?" he inquired at last, rising from his desk.

"It's stupid of me, isn't it?" she admitted with heightened color, tucking the check into her bag with a sort of feverish relief, Dru thought. "I always seem to lose, and the Hendersons play for such big stakes."

"She'll prink for twenty minutes," Alden assured his new fiancée when his stepmother had rustled upstairs. "Poor Clare; she's always in some sort of money difficulty, no matter what I deposit to her credit on the first of the month. It would be more generous, possibly, to settle a sum upon her outright. But she herself realized the un-wisdom of that, asked me not to, when I suggested it a few months ago. It would melt incredibly, I'm afraid."

Dru, her shoulders like porcelain against the gray stone of the fireplace, laughed sympathetically.

"That's the sort of thing I know all about! I'm so glad you've got a lot of money, Alden. If you lost it all, or hadn't any to begin with, I'd marry you anyhow and be sweet and wifely in gingham. But as long as I don't have to——"

He deposited a kiss in her pink palm.

"Speaking of money, Dru"—he hesitated perceptibly—"how are you fixed? If you're pressed, let me come to the front. It's an absurd convention that a man can't give the woman he means to marry anything more practical than books and bonbons and an engagement ring."

"But it's one of the few conventions that I'll keep intact," she told him dryly; and saw, with faint misgiving, the relief in his fine eyes. Thoroughly conventional was Alden.

The click of Clare's French heels on the stairs ended their tête-à-tête.

"I wonder if you'd care for my mother's engagement ring—reset, of course. The stones are very good—twin canary diamonds that have been in the

family for a long time. They are flawless, and a beautiful color."

She flushed with pleasure.

"You couldn't choose anything I'd like better. But why have it reset? If it's old enough, it's undoubtedly lovely."

"You darling! Perhaps you will like it intact. It has rather a fine old wrought-gold setting. We'll go look at it tomorrow. I keep that sort of thing in a vault."

Mrs. Griggs joined them, and he showed them out into the waiting car.

The Hendersons had an apartment on Washington Square North, a short distance from the Griggs' house, but to Drusilla the drive was long enough. After a little desultory conversation they relapsed into silence.

They arrived at the Henderson apartment at last and were met by their hostess, whom Drusilla knew but slightly. She greeted Clare with triumphant gayer.

"So glad you could come! We'll settle up old scores to-night. I was petrified to realize how much I owed you, Clare!" She turned to Drusilla with a little laugh. "Mrs. Griggs plays like a professional, you know. She never loses; is even partner proof!"

So Clare never lost at bridge! And if she always won from the Hendersons, who were excellent players themselves, she could hardly lose systematically to any one else. Whatever her needs for that money might be, it was not for bridge debts. Murmuring the proper thing, Drusilla drifted into the living hall.

Mrs. Griggs had thrown open the Thirty-sixth Street house for the dinner dance she gave—at her stepson's instigation, people said—announcing Dru's engagement. It was the wisest thing she could have done under the circumstances, and it had gone off remarkably well, considering that Clare was not famed as a hostess.

Drusilla, ravishing in a black-velvet frock that emphasized her delicate pallor, her rose-red mouth, was naturally the center of attraction. It was not until the night was nearly spent, that she and Alden were able to steal a moment together. The conservatory, a charming addition to the big old house, had been built out upon the lawn, and could be entered from the grounds, which, small as they were, gave the house a distinction most town houses lack. Here, among the greenery and scented pots of bloom, Dru and her fiancé found cool privacy.

She stood against a mass of fern fronds, bending over a shallow trough of hothouse violets, enormous, purple things whose breath sweetened the narrow, domed-glass chamber.

"We shall never give parties after we're married," determined Alden severely.

"We shall give quantities of them," stated Drusilla with sweet decision. "But we'll only ask amusing people."

They both recognized the fact that Clare had decided upon a very dull invitation list. Her guests had been chosen with a view to the morrow's social columns, in which their names would appear effectively, she hoped. The little ex-actress had never become used to meeting her husband's friends on their own ground, and to-night she had seemed especially worried about her festivities.

"Poor Clare!" mourned Dru generously. "I feel like a beast to be marrying you, and taking her place here. I'm afraid she's rather hostile toward me."

"No house can have two mistresses," Alden said quietly. "She has always known that one day I would marry; she has no right to be hostile, or hurt. I signed the lease of her apartment to-day. She's picked a very attractive place on the Drive, and I shouldn't be surprised if she'd be happier there than she ever has been here."

"She looks," said Dru, "as if she were very unhappy."

Lavish with her own joy, she wanted to share it with the world. She wished that she dared tell Alden what she knew of his stepmother's secret difficulties, but something restrained her. After all, she had no right to pry into Mrs. Griggs' private affairs. And it would be difficult to make Alden understand.

He picked up her hand, that was playing with the violets, and kissed it.

"Don't trouble yourself about things like that, dearest. Clare's happy enough, in her own way." He turned her hand over, touched the twin yellow diamonds that flashed upon her fourth finger. "That ring is perfect on your hand. You were quite right in not having the stones reset." He peered at it more closely. "One of those stones hasn't a very secure look, Dru. Yes, a prong is loose. Better stop in at Tiffany's in the morning and have it fixed. Or shall I take it in?"

She examined it dubiously.

"It's safe enough to wear it to-night, I think. I'll take it in the first thing to-morrow."

Satisfied, he nodded.

"They're awfully good stones, apart from their sentimental value. I'm glad we noticed— What is it, Thomas?"

To his irritation, the large, impassive figure of the butler blocked the doorway. The man was apologetic.

"Excuse me, sir, but there's a person who insists on seeing Mrs. Griggs, outside. He came to the servants' entrance."

"She can't see him, of course. Tell him to call to-morrow, at a proper hour."

Thomas coughed suggestively.

"He was very persistent, sir. He told me she'd be very angry if I didn't tell her he was here. I thought perhaps you knew where she was."

Moved by some sudden intuition, Dru spoke.

"Better look her up, Alden. She'd be annoyed, if she did want to see the man, and you had sent him off. Perhaps she's in the card room."

Alden, at a word from Dru, went in search of his stepmother himself. And Drusilla, a tiny frown between her brows, waited for the flash of Clare's copper-colored gown to reappear. She had seen her slip into the improvised dressing room while Thomas was speaking.

A repowdered Clare crossed the deserted dance floor a minute later, in response to the girl's summoning gesture. At the servant's announcement she turned as pale as the rice powder she so lavishly used.

Dru adroitly managed to shield her round, terror-stricken face from the man's curious eyes.

"Shall I tell him to come to-morrow, madame?"

"No." The knuckles of her plump little hand were white from the force of her grip upon the shell frame of her fan. "I had better see him. Bring him here, please."

Her desperate eyes had fallen upon the French doors that led out upon the lawn.

"Have him come to this door; he need not pass through the house."

Alone with Dru, she turned to the girl.

"Alden—where is he?"

"I sent him upstairs after you," Dru told her quietly. "I fancied you might prefer to see this man alone."

Clare looked away.

"That—that was very kind of you," she acknowledged. "I would prefer it. Could you—see that I am not interrupted here?"

Dru, plucking at the violets, considered the advisability of bidding squarely for the older woman's confidence, which trembled in the balance of her tormented hesitation.

"Trust me——" she began to plead,

and stopped short at the ghost of a cry that quavered from Clare's lips.

Against the dark glass of the door, dim in the gloom of the conservatory, a man's face was pressed; a face neither old nor young, sharp as a wolf's, predatory, sinister. It was the sort of image one associates with an evil dream, and, luminous in the dark, it would re-etch itself in memory with insidious exactness of reproduction.

Drusilla, poised creature that she was, started nervously, striking her wrist against the cold metal of the flower trough, hardly conscious of the abrasion. What had Clare Griggs to do with such a man? What hold had he upon her?

"Please go. Give me five minutes alone with him. That's all I ask."

There was nothing to do but leave her, and help guard her sordid secret by finding Alden on the stairs, satisfying his natural curiosity in part, at least, with the most plausible invention she could devise. Luckily they were swept into a gay group before she had time to finish, and, once in the supper room, the episode was ended.

The rest of the night was a happy blur, against which Clare moved like a figure of tragedy wrongly cast, Dru thought. It was pitiful and terrible that her middle-aged immaturity—an immaturity that cannot develop or be molded into anything else—should have to face a situation that only judgment and daring could handle. It was evident that she had made a tremendous effort to pull herself together, and she had succeeded partly. But to Dru's eyes panic was not concealed by her continuous chatter, her ready mirth. Her shallow blue gaze betrayed a stark terror now and then; her round, rouged mouth a tension that threatened its own reaction.

Something terrible had happened to her in the brief space she had begged for. What? It was easy enough to

piece together the fragments of the situation. Clare the obscure, married late in life, and briefly, to a rich old man who had died suddenly, leaving her dependent upon the bounty of his son, would be the easy prey of some unscrupulous jackal, who was selling his silence high. It was quite possible that she had been satisfying his ever-increasing demands for years.

Dru, setting down her untasted punch, remembered that Alden had mentioned his stepmother's money difficulties. She knew now why, in spite of his generosity, Clare was never quite modishly dressed, never had ready funds. Lately the blackmailer's demands had been doubling, perhaps. And foolish, conscience-stricken Clare, afraid to face her stepson with the truth, had been inventing heavy bridge losses to explain her need for extra money. Tonight the man, whoever he was, had struck his first deadly blow at the foundations of her safety by coming here and forcing an interview.

Poor Clare, for what folly was she paying? It gave Drusilla a guilty twinge to realize that it was her approaching marriage to Alden that had, doubtless, brought the affair to a climax. For her stepson's marriage would inevitably affect Claire's financial standing. She would no longer be able to tap a limitless source when the need arose.

Clare, glittering in her copper-colored sequins, swept toward her, as Ned Moffat displaced Alden at her side.

"Louise Wayne wants to give a luncheon for you before she goes up to the Adirondacks. Will next Wednesday do?"

"Beautifully," Dru told her, knowing very well that another and more urgent message hovered upon her strained lips.

Young Moffat, a fatuous youth, could not be readily dismissed. There was no chance, Drusilla saw, of having a moment alone with her hostess.

"Are you awfully busy to-morrow,

Clare? Too busy to drop in on me at tea time?" she asked idly, and was amazed to see the color recede from her face in a tide, leaving it putty pale, flabby. Why should the woman show such terror at her suggestion? Surely Clare realized by now that she, Drusilla, was anxious to be of service to her in any way she could!

"I'll come." Her lips formed the words with difficulty.

If the third person had been any one but Ned Moffat, he would have sensed the electric contact between them. For the first time Dru blessed the boy's inanity.

"It must be terribly late," she murmured. Clare, with the sword of Damocles quivering above her head, doubtless longed for her guests to be gone. "There's Alden now. I'll get him to drive me home. You've given me a priceless party, Clare."

Her move to depart dispersed the groups scattered about them, as she had known it would. It took a long time to run the gantlet of all these people whom she knew, find her wrap among the gay assortment in the coat room, and, her last good nights said, meet Alden in the hall. But she was glad to relax beside him in the limousine.

"Quite sure you're happy?" demanded her lover. "You look—troubled."

"Quite, quite sure."

She leaned her sleek, dark head against his smooth-shaven cheek. Not often demonstrative, her rare caresses were proportionately precious.

He did not speak again until the machine drew up before the shabby lobby of her West Side apartment building.

"Thank Heaven you'll soon be out of this," he told her. He had always hated the cheap pretentiousness of the black-and-white entrance, the dusty palms, the chipped gilding. She wondered amusedly if it could annoy him as much as it did her. For two years, now, she had lived in this atmosphere of poverty.

The tessellated hallway was dark, the switchboard deserted.

"Good night, dear one!"

As she stood there, her wrap sliding from her shoulders, her curved mouth sweeter and softer than any flower, she was the most beautiful thing in the world to him. Apart from her sheer physical loveliness, there was something so galling about her, so brave and gay and true. It might have been only the candor of her eyes, the bird's-wing sweep of her black brows, the adventurous lift of her chin. But, Alden thought, these things made her the woman he loved.

He raised her hand, so confidently laid in his, to his lips, but it was not kissed. Instead, he uttered a startled exclamation, peered through the uncertain light.

"What is it?"

"Your ring. That loose stone is gone!"

Together, under the switchboard bulb, they examined the symbolic circlet upon her fourth finger. He was right. One of the twin diamonds flashed there, tawny hued, flawless; but beside it, where its mate should have blinked, was only the empty setting.

"How dreadful!" she mourned. "Oh, Alden, I shouldn't have worn it!"

"It seemed safe enough. I should have had it looked at before I gave it to you. Wait; it may have come out in the car and rolled into the upholstery."

They hurried out to the waiting machine, and, with the aid of the chauffeur's flashlight, examined the interior meticulously, only to make certain that it was not there.

"The last time I noticed it was when we were in the conservatory," said Dru slowly, her memory receding to the scene there, just before Mrs. Griggs importunate caller had come.

He was incredulous.

"My dear child! Knowing the stone wasn't absolutely secure, you didn't keep an eye on it?"

"I was thinking of other things," she admitted.

She was remembering Clare's intense fright and dismay, the stark terror in her eyes. Absently she lifted her hand, looked at a small, red bruise just below the wrist. When she had seen Clare's threatening visitor at the door she had started, struck her hand against the sharp edge of the trough in which the violets were bedded. She thought swiftly. Alden did not know, of course, that his stepmother had received the stranger in the conservatory.

"I hurt my wrist against one of the violet pans in the conservatory. The blow might have dislodged the diamond."

"I'll make a thorough search," he promised. "It's safe to say that none of the rooms will have been touched. Clare's very considerate about not keeping the servants up late after she has entertained. The debris is all left until the next morning."

Would he find the stone, she wondered?

"You'll look at once, then, and let me know. I won't go to sleep until you've phoned."

"Absurd child!"

But he promised willingly enough.

An hour later a restless Drusilla was pacing her floor, wrapped in an orchid-hued negligee. Her brow was shadowed with a troubled frown, her eyes were dark pools of doubt. When the telephone finally shrilled she hurried to the desk and snatched the receiver from its hook. Alden's voice, low pitched, came distantly across the wires.

"Dru? I've searched the entire lower floor without finding the missing stone. I fairly combed the conservatory, and didn't confine my search to that. The diamond isn't here."

She was silent a long moment; so long that he spoke again anxiously. Nervously he asked:

"You're there?"

"Yes. I'm horribly sorry, Alden. To realize that it was my own carelessness——"

"It wasn't your carelessness, my dear. Moreover, the thing will turn up. It must. It's got to be somewhere downstairs. The servants are perfectly reliable, and certainly our guests are above suspicion."

She would have given anything in the world to have been able to thrust the doubt from her mind. To Clare, waiting for that sinister figure to enter, to threaten her with whatever weapon of exposure he had been holding over her, the canary diamond must have glittered like a golden hope, embodied in two carats of yellow light.

"I'm afraid I must have lost it in the street."

"Descending the steps? We should have heard it fall, Dru. No, it's somewhere downstairs. It's possible, of course, that one of the servants found it and couldn't withstand the temptation. The thing is worth several thousands, apart from its value as an heirloom. If it doesn't turn up in the morning, I'll put the matter into the hands of the police."

"No!" she forbade him sharply. "I'd much rather you didn't."

His answer when it came had a curious inflection of surprise.

"But if it has been stolen, we want to recover the stone!"

"I know," she pleaded. "But let me have my way. I don't want the police called in. And after all"—her little nervous laugh smote his ears strangely—"it's my diamond!"

It seemed to her afterward—she did not sleep for hours—that he had hung up rather abruptly. Her pleasant sitting room, with its books and flowers and chintzes, its well-placed lights, turned drab and dark suddenly, as if a shadow had fallen upon it. A shadow intangible, too intangible to touch and dispel. Was it the shadow of his doubt?

All day Druscilla waited for the phone to ring, announcing his presence downstairs, or only that, across the city, he was thinking of her. But all that came was an impersonal box of flowers that meant nothing to her on this particular day. A dozen times she went to the desk, his number on her lips; as many times she sat staring into the mouth-piece of the instrument, unwilling to lift the receiver.

She broke her appointments for the day ruthlessly, not wanting to leave the apartment. Yet she found herself unable to concentrate on anything in it. The midmorning mail brought forth the first of the monthly allotment of bills—an appalling array—and a delightful letter from Lorry, whom she had just written about her engagement. He was in the highest spirits himself, but, as usual, low in funds. Could she exchange checks with him? He inclosed his own check, dated a month ahead, for five hundred. He was in rather a tight place, and, naturally, did not want to borrow from his bride.

Being Druscilla, she figured up her bank balance after she had made out a check for the desired amount, inclosed it in an affectionate note, and tucked it into the slot of the mail chute outside her door.

It was midafternoon when her front doorbell rang vehemently, brought her on winged feet to see who it was that had come up, unannounced. But it was not Alden who waited admittance in the box of a hall. It was Clare Griggs, pale, with a pinkish look to her eyelids that wrecked the wax-doll prettiness that was hers. She was still a wax doll, but a wax doll that had been neglected, left out in the rain, or too close to the fire.

"They didn't find the diamond?" Dru caught at the faint hope.

Mrs. Griggs shook her head.

"Nor any trace of it. When did you first realize it was gone?"

Dru glanced obliquely at her guest

over the copper box of cigarettes she was offering her.

"Not until I got home. The last that I saw of it was in the conservatory."

Clare controlled the trembling of her under lip with an effort.

"Alden was very much disturbed about it. He thinks one of the servants may have found it. He—he insists upon notifying the police."

Her round eyes, panic filled, sought Dru's averted face. The younger woman said nothing.

"Don't you think you could persuade him to let the matter drop?" begged Clare under her breath.

Dru, torn between pity and a disgust she could not vanquish, jumped up. What was this woman to her? She didn't particularly like Clare Griggs, had nothing in common with her. Why should she be coerced in this fashion to protect her?

"Possibly." Her tone was curt. "But, to be quite frank, Clare, why should I?"

Clare pulled at the tight, purple mesh of her veil; moistened her lips.

"Would you, if I were to tell you that I knew where the diamond was, and could get it for you within a week?" she asked.

"Are you telling me that?" asked Druscilla quietly.

"Yes," said Clare, and thereupon burst into a torrent of tears. Druscilla, who never wept, was always at a loss in the presence of an emotional outburst. She could only tuck her own absurd handkerchief into Clare's hand, pat her ineffectually, and beg her to look up and stop crying. And presently, when the worst of the storm had passed, she brought powder and puff, knowing that Clare would want to repair the havoc wrought as soon as possible. But, to Dru's astonishment, she pushed the symbols of her undying vanity from her and shook her head.

"No. I feel better now. You're a

sweet child, Dru. Don't hate me utterly, will you?"

Dru wondered how any one could hate so battered and tear-wrecked an object.

"Don't be silly," she scolded. "And tell me a little more. I'll do the best I can, of course."

Surprisingly, Clare came to the point.

"I know where your diamond is because—I have the pawn ticket in my bag." Her lip trembled again, but she went on. "I didn't take it. On my word of honor, I didn't. But—I know who did!"

Dru nodded her head, realizing that she knew, too.

"The man who forced himself upon you last night. Who is he? What is his hold over you, Clare?"

"The strongest hold in the world," moaned Clare. "Dru—he's my son!"

"Your—son!" It was a gasp of amazement.

"That's why I've been letting him wring money from me for years. Oh, he's a callous creature; he's cruel and sly and willing to take every cent he can force out of me, but he's got me under his thumb!"

She struck the chair arm with her pudgy, ineffectual fist.

"He knows he's safe for two reasons. First of all, no one knows of his existence—no one here. Secondly, he is my boy, and I suppose, if it came to the pinch, I'd lie and cheat and steal to save him. And I'm doing it now, all because I was a fool eight years ago. When I married Malvin Griggs I carefully concealed the fact that I had been married before, had a grown son. I wasn't proud of ever having been the wife of Amos Clapp. This boy is his father's son in every way." She smiled bitterly, dabbing at her eyes.

"Well, I married Malvin; how, Heaven only knows. I was pretty, then. And not long after that, Ernest—my son—turned up. At first he was humble and grateful as could be when I gave

him what he wanted. But it didn't last long. Before Malvin died I was being systematically blackmailed, and by that time I was in too deep to make a clean breast of it. Malvin thought me madly extravagant; he never made a new will on that account. He knew he could trust to Alden to do the right thing, and he always has. But I've never dared tell him. I don't dare now. Partly on Alden's own account. Think of the scandal it would make!

"But Ernest has overreached himself this time. He has been killing the goose that lays the golden egg. When he came last night I was bewildered; I had no more money to give him. I tried to put him off, to explain the situation, but he was desperate. He had to have money immediately, or it would mean jail for him! I told him to wait till today, and his answer was to snatch that platinum bracelet I wear from my arm. The original went long ago! Every diamond in the thing is paste, and he flung it back at me with an oath.

"All the time, Dru, we could hear the dance music. Oh, it was horrible! Do you know where the bracelet fell? Into that pan of violets, where you had been standing. He picked it up a minute later, saying he might raise a few hundreds out of the platinum, if that were real, and we both saw something round and bright among the leaves. Your diamond, Dru! I saw what had happened, begged him to let me have it, promised anything. He only laughed in my face. But, before he went, I made him promise to send me the pawn ticket. He wouldn't get its true value on a quick sale, and knew it. So an hour ago I got it. That's all—except that I'll raise the money somehow within the week, and get it out. I've trusted you; you can't betray me to Alden. He'd never understand. Ernie's a rotter, but he's mine. Nothing must happen to him!"

"I won't betray you," promised Dru-silla slowly. "But you should tell Al-

den for your own protection. 'He would understand!'

"No!" Clare's hot hands gripped her own feverishly. "Promise me, Dru! Promise me you won't tell him. I've trusted you now with everything; you can't fail me!"

Dru, very pale, held out her hand.

"I've given you my word," she reminded the other woman. "I always keep it. May I have the ticket, please."

Broodingly she examined the blue cardboard, with, opposite its number, a descriptive scrawl that read: "One canary diamond, two-and-a-half carats. Seven hundred dollars."

Seven hundred dollars! She didn't have that much in the world. Yet, in some way, she would have to get the money and retrieve the jewel.

"I don't dare to go to Alden again for money," admitted his stepmother. "But I'll manage."

Dru rose to her feet.

"Leave the ticket with me," she said. "I'll redeem it myself. Your responsibility is ended."

"You'll not let him call the police?"

"I'll do my best to keep him from notifying them. I'd better get in touch with him now, I suppose."

She didn't have time. The bell whirled, and the darky hall boy announced:

"Mr. Griggs calling."

"You'd better not be here," she told Clare. "No; you'll meet him in the front hall if you go that way. Go through the kitchen out into the service hall."

She was alone when Alden found her, and his troubled eyes instantly discerned her strained pallor.

"You're worrying about the diamond," he accused her tenderly. "Don't. We'll trace it soon, I expect. I disobeyed you—put it in the hands of a detective agency. A man is already on his way to the house."

She looked at him in blank horror.

"You did that—when I asked you not to?"

"My dearest girl"—she slid out of his grasp—"it's obvious, to me at least, that one of the servants found it and kept it. You are always on the side of the offender; I have a weakness for justice. If it's a first offense, I shan't prosecute. But the thief deserves to be apprehended, and we want the diamond."

"What—what will the police do?" she demanded breathlessly.

"Throw out a dragnet over all the pawnshops first, I suppose."

That must not be done. She found him very stern as she scanned the gray eyes she loved, the finely modeled mouth.

"Alden, I've never asked anything—anything big—of you before. I ask it now. Call off the police, your detectives. You must!"

He stared at her.

"I can't understand your attitude."

"I don't ask you even to try. If you love me at all, go to the phone, tell them the stone is found—anything! But get rid of them."

She was desperate, and her desperation affected him strangely.

"Dru—" Faith fought hard with doubt.

She clung to him, lifting her little face imploringly. The precious minutes were passing.

"You're hard—hard! Please believe me, Alden, it's for the best."

"I must decide that for myself."

"Then—it may change your decision when I tell you—promise you—that I can recover the diamond for you if you'll give me time enough."

"You!"

She nodded, sickened by the ring of his voice, the incredulous, then uncertain, dismay that stamped him for a long moment before it changed and hardened into conviction. He caught her wrists, turned her to him.

"Tell me the truth, Dru, the whole truth!" he implored.

"I've told you all I can tell you, except this: I haven't the diamond now. I haven't had it." She smiled piteously. "I was right, wasn't I, about the shadow of doubt? Only—your doubt has substance! Alden, why can't you believe in me?"

He turned away toward the desk where the telephone stood behind its silk screen.

"I will do what you wish."

That meant, she realized, that he was doing it only because he believed her guilty, was in honor bound to protect her. The irony of it! Her wounded eyes watched him as he waited for his number, saw his own gaze fall upon the papers that littered the desk, the sheath of bills, and the second page of Lorry's letter. Over his shoulder part of a paragraph leaped up at her.

... and I've simply got to have the money. Five hundred will see me through, if you'll let me have it at once.

He was speaking curtly.

"No further need of your services. Yes, bill me at my office."

Then, for a long moment, they faced each other despairingly. It was she who dismissed him.

"As soon as the diamond is in my possession you shall have it."

"Dru, it's yours!"

She shook her head, dreadfully afraid of the tears that burned her eyelids. With a cold little sound the gold ring, with its single unmated jewel, fell on the table. She pushed it toward him.

"No, Alden. You'd never trust me again, you see. And I can't—go into details about this. So—this is the end."

It was.

An hour later, worn with a grief that weighed her down like some physical burden, she rose from the divan where she had flung herself when the door shut behind him. Not much later she was in a jolting taxi, that was making its way down the dark and cobbled streets of the lower East Side.

She had been in pawnshops before, but never in so small, so dark, so sinister a place of shadows as the grimy basement, before which her machine stopped. An old man, the tint of parchment except for his red-rimmed eyes, peered at her across the counter.

"I want some money on these," she told him, and dropped before his bird-like eyes a strand of small, perfectly matched pearls. These, a gift that she had earned many times over for the happiness she had made possible for Kitty Bosford, who had linked them around her neck, were her mascots; her only possession which was of value.

She did not haggle over the thousand that he offered her, but took the greasy money gratefully, and then handed him the pawn ticket which Mrs. Griggs had given her.

"I want to redeem this."

He fingered the bit of cardboard.

"It vass a young man who brought dot diamond in to me."

"I know." She was frantic to get the stone in her possession.

"Dere seems to haf been a liddle trouble about dot stone. You bedder come in to-morrow."

"I have the ticket," she told him imperiously. "The stone is mine. I want it now."

A soundless chuckle shook him.

"De police, dey think different. Dot diamond vas taken a little while back by a fellow from headquarters." His withered shoulders hunched extravagantly. "I can do nodding about it. I am an honest man, myself."

So Alden's order to drop the case had been put in too late! All her anguish of soul had been unnecessary, wasted. The pawnbroker was astonished at the happiness that rayed from her. Certainly she had no cause to laugh like that under her breath at the information he had given her!

"I see," she said, and was gone.

But on the cobbled street her brief joy

was obliterated suddenly by the sharp memory of Clare—Clare in her agony and fear for her worthless son. If she went home, waited for Alden to come, penitent and adoring, the ghost of Clare's anguish would haunt her always. For Alden—she knew him so well, now, his sternness, his sense of justice—would let Ernest Clapp, wastrel and scoundrel, too, very likely, pay the full penalty that he had so far escaped. And that would break Clare's silly, loving heart. And she had given Clare her word. Oh, it was quixotic, absurd, she knew, but it would save heartbreak, if she got there in time. She stepped into the taxi, gave the driver the number.

It seemed an interminable distance, yet when she got there, and found herself in the hall which she knew so well, she shrank from what awaited her.

"You needn't announce me, Thomas. I—I think I know who is with him."

She brushed past him, opened the library door. There stood Alden, grim lipped. In a chair sprawled a sullen-faced youth whose white, weakly vicious face she recognized, and standing over him was a plain-clothes man.

"I have just come from Reuben's. I got there a little late, it seems." Her eyes reproached Alden, who was only a silhouette against the fire. "I told you I would redeem the diamond, Alden; you might have taken me at my word." She held out the pawn ticket.

Was she in time? The tableau might mean anything.

Griggs stepped forward.

"My dear, my dear," he murmured, "can I ever earn your forgiveness?"

The plain-clothes man touched Clapp on the shoulder.

"We'll be going along, then, Mr. Griggs."

"Wait!" Alden spoke peremptorily. "I want nothing of the sort. I prefer no charge against him."

Drusilla nodded, her eyes very soft, and he knew he had won his guerdon.

Five minutes later a very much bewildered officer of the law, having successfully tracked down his quarry, left the old brown-stone house alone, marveling at certain inconsistencies of the cleverest business men. In the firelit library the sullen youth scowled at Dru and her fiancé ferociously, possibly to conceal a trembling of his underlip.

"Well," he demanded, "you got the goods on me, all right. What do you want now?"

"I want you to go upstairs and make your unhappy mother a little happier. You're a poor excuse of a son, but she happens to care for you," Alden told him sternly. "When you come down we'll talk over a new start, and the rest of that sentimental rot!"

It was rather a dazed boy who slunk past them, paused on the threshold.

"You're dead right about the sort of son she's got, but she's got a pretty decent stepson for compensation," he said almost fervently, with that occasional manifestation of a sense of the fitness of things which even the most depraved exhibit.

His steps creaked on the stair.

There was little need for speech in the library. Dru, safe against Alden's heart, sighed happily. His halting tale told, her full pardon of him sealed with her lips, they sat in the warm fire glow. The shadow would never fall upon them again.



IF they follow the fashion set by Princess Mary American women will soon don voluminous riding habits and ride sidesaddle. At a recent horse show in London only four out of twenty-one competitors rode astride. Experts agree that apart from the fact that a woman looks more graceful riding sidesaddle, it is a sign of mediocre horsemanship to ride astride.



A Parable for Lilla

By Frances O. J. Gaither,

Author of "The Bird Cage," "Amazons," etc.



THEY sat on an iron bench pavilioned by a live oak. The bench stood close against the trunk of the tree in a kind of sanctuary of shadows. The branches, down sweeping from high overhead, frayed into leaves at their far extremities like the fringe upon some vast, sloping canopy. This made the sunlit drive, fifty feet away, seem much farther off than it really was, and the panorama of motor cars a pageant out of a dream. There were oleanders brushing the margin of the drive, deeply carmined oleanders and creamy ones flushing only so much as clear skin flushes. And, where the drive circled and vanished from sight, there showed, through the stiff, green portals of a clipped hedge, a garden of annuals as flawless in tint as a nest of Easter eggs. At the very heart of the garden, beyond the snapdragons, a bronze baby perpetually tilted a bronze watering pot. The spray from the watering pot blew about and made prisms in air.

Trowbridge's hands hung between his knees, and his cane hung between his hands. He had thin cheeks. Through them showed the sensitive line of his jaw. His lips were thin, too. They grew thinner in disapproval. They were scarcely more than a line, just now, because of what Lilla had said. Lilla studied the bit of carved ivory pendent on the chain she wore. She disliked apologizing. Still——

"I meant nothing," she said; "nothing real."

"But 'dreary.' Dreary is a damned ugly word, Lilla."

"Then I withdraw it. It was badly chosen."

The ferrule of his cane was erasing a name on the ground, the name of a city half a world away. Lilla read the syllables. Dreary. They did connote dreariness, whether one said it aloud or not. Alien syllables suggesting no link with anything she knew. She fancied it would be a dirty, smelly place.

"The fact is, you chose yourself, Lilla. You remember I suggested Cannes."

"Of course I did, Tony. I much prefer the Orient. I've never seen the East—except in 'Kismet' and 'Mecca.' One doesn't get much idea from the stage; just a jumbled impression of bazaars and camel drivers and romance and——"

The taut muscles in Trowbridge's face relaxed. He laughed. Lilla leaned her shoulders against the iron bench, then, and let her pendant fall back upon her lap. She looked out at the streak and flare of sunlight on passing automobiles, and the flowers bright as package dyes. The brilliance struck acutely into her eyes, almost stabbed them.

"Romance!" Trowbridge echoed. "So that's it, Lilla. You want to be reassured how romantic it's all going to

be, don't you? What a child you are, in some ways!" He turned and smiled at her. But then his lips looked reproachful again. "After all you've said about European places and being treated shabbily by people we'd meet it did rather startle me to have you say——"

"Please forget it, Tony. Nerves. I fancy a lot of people get a whiff of staleness at the threshold of adventure—like the air from one of those New York subway entrances. All day I've hated—oh, not the big thing we are doing, Tony; just the little details about it. I loathed pouring Harvey's coffee this morning and laughing at his jokes. He was particularly—gay."

"I must say you're in a strange mood, Lilla. It isn't like you to be capricious."

He turned squarely about and studied her. His bewilderment struck her suddenly as funny.

"Have a whiff yourself, Tony? A tiny misgiving of dreariness in me?"

"Not at all," he said a little stiffly.

Her eyes dropped and her fingers sought the ivory pendant.

"See here, Lilla. Are you sorry we are doing it? Are you going to be sorry you didn't divorce Harvey? God knows you could stir up cause."

"Oh, there's no good in proving Harvey's shortcomings. Let's leave Harvey out of this. I've no patience with the people who stir up somebody else's faults to condone their own acts. I'm not that sort of coward, Tony. Besides, it's ugliness I'm running from."

She was sitting forward again, breathing a little quickly. Trowbridge did not look at her.

"No," she said, "it isn't that. It's just—oh, I don't know. There's Alberta, for one thing——"

Trowbridge laughed.

"Alberta! It would be an imaginative person who could suppose that Harvey's sister has any claim on you. A more independent baggage——"

"Don't, Tony."

Trowbridge was writing with his cane again. He wrote again the name of the promised land she had desecrated with forebodings of dreariness. Under it, he wrote her name.

"I only hope," said Trowbridge coldly, "that these misgivings, these—er—whiffs you speak of will evaporate before to-morrow morning. Or else we——"

The pendant felt cold against her finger tips. She stared at him, at his smooth hair, his clean-shaven cheek, his tight lips, his speckless collar, his smooth-fitted coat. Then she looked down at her name, looked down at "Lilla" forming under the ferrule of his stick. She read her own name exactly beneath those foreign syllables.

"I don't quite understand you, Tony."

"I mean you are still free to choose, Lilla."

It was only a second that she sat chilled, unable to speak; only a second, then she laughed.

"We're absurd, utterly absurd, Tony. Fancy our quarreling to-day!"

He continued icy.

"Better to-day than——"

She leaned forward and laid both hands on his, atop his stick.

"There. Be kind, Tony, please. And don't hint at such terrible things as abandoning me to—to ugliness. I own I am exasperating. But it's nerves. Gracious, Tony, I've never eloped before. Do you expect me to be perfectly unruffled?"

She strove to make her laugh light, to keep wistfulness out of her tones.

He stood up.

"It's damned awkward for me, Lilla, if you don't know, yourself, what you want."

"Oh, but I do. Of course I do."

When he left her she sat still and watched him out of sight. She saw him bend his head to pass under a down-swung branch and stop to let cars pass; saw him flick a twig from his

path; saw him stride, dark and assured against the carmine oleanders, across the drive; saw him at the clipped portals.

In the walk before the entrance to the garden a little boy sat, legs stuck out like open shears. He was absorbed in some sort of toy on wheels, some red, tin toy, an automobile, a wagon. Some obscure business of repairs was afoot. Trowbridge, all but stepping over boy and wagon, was accosted, the tin toy held up for inspection. Lilla was much too far away to hear, across the motors singing down the drive, what the child said or how Trowbridge answered, but somehow, seeing the boy bespeak Trowbridge's sympathy, she felt her heart leap queerly; and when Trowbridge shook his head without pausing in his long stride down came her flying heart as if winged by some marksman.

He passed from sight. She looked down and read, scrawled in the gravel at her feet, the loops and rounds of her familiar name linked with mysterious foreign syllables. Echoed that question of hers which had so angered him: "Tell me honestly, Tony, is it at all a dreary sort of place?"

Slowly she drew the sole of her shoe across the characters, across and back, and they were no more. In their place was only a little arc of smoothness on the ground. Lilla stood up.

Some one else was giving first aid to the red, tin toy by the time Lilla came up, a bigger boy than he who owned the bit of a wagon, a boy with infinite resources of rubber band and string and mechanical knowledge. Foolishly Lilla sighed. Beyond the absorbed children, she could see deep into the painted garden. Ridiculous how she clung to it, a park garden! Nevertheless she clung, stood actually minutes on end watching the prisms break from the spray of the fountain, break and hang an instant glancing in air, the way cooked sugar spins off the spoon when you test it.

Lilla's husband had round cheeks—a boy's cheeks. He had a boy's laugh, too, but not a boy's eyes. His eyes were blue and rather small; and sometimes when he looked at Lilla without listening they were entirely opaque. Other times Harvey's eyes grew very bright—when there were particularly bad cocktails or when he had just come swaggering in from a director's meeting he had bullied. Then the flesh at Harvey's temples crinkled and drew his eyes even smaller than they already were, but did not obscure the twinkling of them. This evening he had had no cocktail, and he was looking at Lilla without listening to her. So his eyes were dull.

He sat at a careless, half-recumbent angle in an over-stuffed chair, and turned his face toward her politely when she spoke. It was exactly as though she stood before a house which had been boarded up for the summer.

"Did you hear, Harvey?"

"Yes, certainly, my dear."

"Well, what do you think? Do you think a person who is admittedly quite useless in a vocation, say, has any duty to that—er—vocation?"

His unwinking gaze never left her face. A yawn fluttered against his lips, but politely he restrained it.

"Eh? How is that, my dear? But dinner, Lilla—don't you suppose Alberta's ready?"

"I'll go and see," said Lilla.

Alberta's short, curled hair was wet at the edges from her swift bath. She sat on the floor pulling on her stockings. The stockings were exactly the color of creamy oleanders which are flushed with pink. When Alberta pulled her stockings tight one persuaded oneself with a little difficulty that they really were stockings. Her pose on the floor had all the coltish angularity of a ballerina study by a determined young modernist. She was quite unself-conscious in her sister-in-law's presence.

Her mental processes occasioned her

as little shyness as the ritual of her toilet. She exulted to Lilla about a conquest of the afternoon.

"He said he felt he had known me a thousand years. And I said, 'Only a thousand years, old cheese! Have you forgotten that little dinner-dance we went in the Valley of the Kings?'"

Alberta's drawl was viscous and fruity. It cloyed one's understanding. Or, perhaps, her luscious cadences were really too lovely to permit one to listen to her words. At any rate, Lilla could answer Alberta's chronicles with a smile only. And when Alberta sprang Diana-like to her feet and stood drying her hair with swift, easy gestures, combing and fluffing the damp curls with her finger tips Lilla went on smiling.

"After all," said Lilla to herself, "she's very young. Poor little Berta. No mother. And I—I have no children. If Bertha does need me——"

Alberta wriggled into a silken sheath like the cup of a tulip, touched her lips with a carmine stick, swung a rope of cut jade around her neck, and, rummaging in a box on her dressing table, drew out something which flashed and was pliant, crushing almost to invisibility in her closed palm. Lilla, barely restraining a start, caught the girl's eyes in the mirror. Alberta laughed.

"Old Cat Eyes," she drawled.

She uncoiled the little ribbon of gems and let it dangle in her fingers. Linked platinum squares flashed alternate diamonds and emeralds.

"It is Chance Middleton's bracelet," said Lilla in spite of herself.

"Alberta's bracelet," Alberta corrected, clasp ing it on her wrist with a flourish of bravado.

"But, Alberta, you aren't going to marry him."

Alberta laughed.

"Chance Middleton wasn't due any rain checks when our little game was called."

"Berta——" said Lilla, and stopped.

Alberta, in midflight to the door, tapped a slipper impatiently.

"Well, Lilla?" Alberta's eyes narrowed. If it's anything more about my own business, forget it, those eyes warned. "Well?" Tap of slipped toe, flash of silken ankle, warning glint of eye. "What do you want, Lilla? Shoot."

"Nothing, Berta. Thanks."

Dinner over, Berta gone, they sat alone together, Harvey and Lilla. Harvey exhorted her to conversation.

"Chat, child, chat. Let's be as agreeable as possible if we must sit here. Where've you been this afternoon? What've you bought? Who've you seen?"

"I've been to Napoleon Park. I haven't bought anything. I've seen Tony Trowbridge."

Harvey threw back his head and laughed. His laugh was like Alberta's, viscous and fruity.

"Sat on a park bench with Tony, eh? How thrillingly bourgeois! Well, how's old Tony?"

"He's—all right."

"Old Tony hasn't been around much lately."

"No."

"Why hasn't he, I wonder?"

"I asked him up to dinner. But he couldn't come. He—sails to-morrow."

"Oh. Back where the dawn comes up like thunder, to a neater, sweeter maiden, eh? Poor Tony. No stability. His business will go to pot. However, it's the life. You say he sails to-morrow?"

"Yes. At ten."

"I suppose I'd better call him up."

"You—you think you'd better?"

"Yes. I want to have a dig at him. S'pose he's at home—Tidewater?"

"Yes. I think he is."

He came back shortly in high glee. His digs at Trowbridge had gone home, it seemed. Oh, yes, they had. Old Tony had squirmed, and no mistake.

Those monkish chaps do squirm when you stick 'em.

"Harvey, listen."

"Well, be quick," he said. Had her tone frightened him? He thought Lilla made scenes. Was that it? She could never tell. "Engagement at the club," he muttered. "Late now. What do you want?"

She tried to tell him quickly and succinctly. But he frowned.

"What is the matter with you, Lilla? You start off trying to tell me something you want, and then you drag in Berta and the same old story of having no children. My God, how'm I to tell what you want?" His voice rose petulantly. "Talk straight, Lilla. What *do* you want?"

After he had gone she telephoned to Trowbridge. Tony, too, asked her that question.

"What is it, Lilla?" Then, when she couldn't tell him: "What do you want, child?"

The question all but loosed the hysteria pulsing in her throat. What do you want, Lilla, what do you want? It's damned awkward for Tony, my dear, if you don't know yourself. What *do* you want, Lilla? My God, how can Harvey tell? She fought down the tide of weeping laughter that pounded in her throat.

"Tony, I'm just lonesome; and this afternoon was disappointing. It's so long till sailing time."

"But isn't it rather late for me to come?"

"I—I want to come to you."

"You darling!"

This, at least, was decision, action, even. This wasn't sitting waiting for hours to creep past.

She was going to drive to Tidewater to see Tony and recapture calm. She wasn't really undecided. Of course she wasn't. She was only nervous. What do you want, Lilla? Do you, yourself, know? There. That's the proof. It's

9—Ains.

nerves. The way that question has gathered about your ears since afternoon, although everything is settled, reservations made. Everything is settled.

There is something about driving alone at night like being disembodied, mounted on a wind of heaven. There is a detachment, a cleanness. Lilla, steering her car, felt her heart tug upward like something winged. She had splendidly a sense of having no fixed objective, no starting point, either. Nor was she lost in thought. Not at all. She was above thought or below it, outside of it, anyway. She was all eyes for the starry heavens and the palms brushing them, for the lights in houses and the swift glimpses of life inside.

Sara Jeannot was entertaining. Cards. Windows were open, even shades, to catch a breeze. The old-fashioned double parlors decorated to Sara's new-fashioned taste folded in a party from the night, like a stage walled with light from the dark of its theater. The flash of gowns and shoulders, the black of dinner coats, gathered at tables, registered a clear image, for all it was so fleet.

High white portals and fragments of low white balustrade etched against black foliage marked out an entrance to Napoleon Park. Inside the balustrade, oleanders gleamed wan as her car, swerving into the drive, pointed stiff fingers of light full upon them. The oleanders had no color, but a sort of ghostly fairness. Live oaks bent low, shaping her way to a tunnel of shadow. Ahead of her crouched the dark mass of the formal, hedged-in garden, and opposite—a mere bulk of shade—the live oak she had sat under with Trowbridge. The stiff fingers of her lights parted the tented shade, pointed lovers on the bench who did not even start at revelation.

After the park came Lorraine Terrace. Alberta made sport of Lorraine

Terrace. Driving by when houses stood open as now, Alberta counted floor lamps and davenport and end tables.

"We furnish your home complete," Alberta would chant from remembered advertisements. Or, if it were daylight, Alberta counted concrete jars filled with Boston ferns on the porches or kiddy cars in the walks.

Lilla sighed as the last house dropped behind her. Then she remembered she had meant to lift a wind. There were the railroad tracks ahead, many barred as a music score. She flared her lamps to make sure the gate was open and then gave the motor gas. Ah, that was flying.

She glimpsed the flagman leaning shirt sleeved in his door, a clear silhouette against the lighted interior. Then she was on the long flat road behind the villas that strung along the beach, a white road between shadows. The lights of houses twinkled only as far stars veiled by moss-hung trees. Left behind was the last island of light. Lift a wind, lift a wind! Lilla bent over her wheel and drank in the moist air of a bayou whirring to frog music.

Driving like this was tonic, driving under stars with a sure grip on the wheel, steering oneself on a white road leading to—to—ah, say it, Lilla, say it, now that you are no longer nervous, now that you are sure—

Steering oneself along a white road to happiness.

Lilla's hands tightened on the wheel. Faster. The wind from the bayous laid cool fingers on her forehead. There is such a thing as happiness. One sees it clearly in little islands of light that float in the dark. Lots of people must be happy. Lilla was going to be.

Her lamps unrolled a carpet in front. The white road was magnified. The little hollows showed valleys, and the ridges, hills. A rabbit darting over was magnified, too, into sudden importance. The rabbit stopped in a rut, wavered

there, as if snared in the mesh of light, hovered mesmerized, staring. Lilla groped for the brakes.

Oh, too bad, just now when—

Don't think about it. Don't think about it. Maybe it got away, somehow, under the car, you know. It could have. Don't think about it, anyway. Here's Tidewater.

The gate swung open when her wheels ran over the lever that controlled it. She blew her horn as she guided the car between live oaks. The signal had a lyric, sudden quality. Far away at the bottom of the drive, a house door opened. It's light made lacework of the moss in the branches before her. She heard Trowbridge's voice. He was calling her name. She steered herself full into the light from the door. She looked into his face.

His lips were parted. His face was suffused with a new look, a—a warm look. He helped her out, almost lifted her out. His palms were warm, too, against her arms when her wide sleeves fell back. His voice was warm.

"Lilla, Lilla. You darling. Coming to me like this."

He drew her close, whispering warm words, whispering endearments. His embrace was—ah, to stand like this in his arms here before the bright doorway was to stand oneself on an island of light! Lilla felt wrapped about by such a radiance as must be at the very core of life.

And then—amazing it could happen so quickly—Lilla was alone in the dark before a shut door.

But it happened. Oh, yes, it happened. For here she was trying to turn the car, having trouble with the starter, having trouble getting through an inky tunnel under trees with no beacon ahead to make the mosses look like lace.

Painfully as she drove off she tried to trace it out. How had it happened?

First she had been in his arms, finding at last complete assurance that here

was happiness, feeling walled in with radiance, thinking about that, hardly hearing words at all, just being happy; then something—exactly what? The clutch of a hand hot against her bare elbow—or words? Was it what he said about having sent the servants away? Ah, no matter. Something had told what he was expecting, and she had said—what *had* she said?

What had Lilla said; what bitter inconsequential phrases? "Oh, Tony, I didn't want—that is, until to-morrow—until I've quite left Harvey—" Was that what Lilla had said? Never mind. The radiance had been shattered. The rest she remembered. There was no forgetting.

Tony had stood apart from her, lips thinned to satire, his voice striking her with an edge cold as steel, words of endearment suddenly given place to words meant to stab and stab.

"So you only came to talk, Lilla; only to indulge another feast of indecision such as we had this afternoon."

Then he had handed her back into her car, bending over the door as he shut it, elaborately courteous, quoting her a parable.

"Starved between two bales of hay! You should remember the fable," he had mocked. "I'm sure it must have been in your earliest school reader."

Railroad tracks cut the road ahead of her. Lilla saw them now, not smoothly barred as a music score, but wavering like the flag in a wind. She saw the signalman's hut, not a jack-o'-lantern hanging clear, but blurred like some reflection drowned in a pool. The cruel fable had whipped tears from her, so that everything showed distorted.

"The point of the parable, my dear Lilla, is this: Indecision is, if you will pardon my saying so, a fatal failing."

In conclusion Lilla perceived as the wheels of her car bumped on the rails that a train was coming.

She perceived it as a rush of light

and a storm of sound. She had a corner of space in thought for the gatekeeper who must be, though she really hadn't noticed, indolently leaning while the train came on. The rest of her pulsed to a challenge:

Gas or reverse, Lilla? Gas or reverse? You must decide quickly.

She dashed the tears from her eyes. But she couldn't see which track the train was on. The headlight blinded her.

In front of Lilla, surprised like her, another motor car came grinding to a sudden halt. The unreal tide of brilliance which the on-rushing train poured forth made the faces of the people in the car curiously distinct. There was a young man at the wheel, rather a cheap young man in a red necktie. There was a young woman beside him with a bundle in her arms. Both the young man and the young woman let their features set in strange, grotesque lines like Greek actors' masks.

"They've stopped in time. They're not on the tracks at all. Why are they still afraid?" Fear made their faces ugly. Lilla looked away from them into the core of an infinite radiance. "This is the way that rabbit stared at my lamps."

Strange images moved in the heart of the blue-white, penetrating flood. There, somehow, she saw Harvey and Alberta and Tony. It was very queer.

The picture of Tony was strangest because, whereas she saw the others in familiar surroundings, Tony she saw in a street she never had seen really. It was a steep street chiseled into a stair whereon people went shuffling in sandals. She saw the people's tunics blowing in the wind and heard the babble of their strange Oriental tongue; smelled, even, acrid odors drifting between the crowded bazaars; saw the very pattern of a rug hanging up for sale—a rug in blues of twilight and the tawny aftertones of a sunset over water.

Swinging up the stair moved Trowbridge. He was in a far city—though it wasn't a dreary place, she noted in some surprise. Just then a beggar accosted him, a scrap of a child, half naked. She could see the shadow between his high, dark shoulder blades; the twist of rag around his thin little hips. Trowbridge stopped. He dropped a coin in the bowl held up to him, put his hand on the child's naked shoulder, stood talking, smiling down.

Alberta she saw laying a bracelet of bright jewels into a little purple-velvet box; saw her wrapping the box up to send away. Alberta's looks were downcast. First, it seemed a bit too bad that any one so young and beautiful as Alberta should have cause for sacrifice. Too bad for poor little Berta to be offering up her vanities. But when Berta tied the strings of her package and sighed there was something—well, nice—about the sigh, slipping gently between uncarmined lips.

Harvey she saw breaking laurel boughs upon a country road while she sat in the saddle and held the bridle rein of his horse with hers. Harvey was slender and boyish, laughing when she called for another branch high above his head. There was a tingling smell of damp, green things all around them. When Harvey came toward her with both hands full he teased her for her greed. He had left his cap on the pommel of his saddle, so his head was bare. He looked up at her, smiling. His eyes were boy's eyes, clear and blue.

She saw Harvey and Alberta and Tony like that, saw them transfigured. Nor was this all.

Deep in the heart of the light which snared Lilla's gaze and held it fast, there gleamed, rainbow bright, a thousand little things she had loved and wanted more of.

Actually, a bit of sewing. She saw the tiniest outline of the humming bird and apple blossoms she had basted on

black satin and had meant to appliqué. She caressed with her forefinger the humming bird and the pale-pink petals of the apple blossoms.

She saw a book she hadn't finished, a thick book with half the pages still uncut, a book about Whistler, with pleasant page upon page of thumb-nail sketches and other page upon page of tinted replicas of pastels. She turned the pages slowly. There was a print of a garden with a great tree under which slender women went trailing soft-colored silks.

She looked under awninglike branches, looked through a leafy fringe at the flash and flare of bright, swift automobiles. There were oleanders brushing the margin of the drive, deeply carmined oleanders and creamy ones flushing only so much as unrouged skin may flush. Where the drive, circling, turned from sight, clipped, green portals framed a vista of annuals as varied and as flawless in color as Easter eggs in a green nest.

In front of that opening, a little boy sat in the path, legs stuck out like parted shears. He played with a small red wagon with one wheel off. Lilla went over and mended it for him. She took string and a rubber band from her pocket to mend it. She slipped the wheel on the axle and wrapped the end of the axle tightly round and round until the wheel was secure. After she mended the toy wagon she lingered in the path to look and look at the fountain. The fountain stood at the very heart of the garden. The fountain was a bronze baby flinging spray from a bronze watering pot. The bronze was sleek. It gleamed in the sun. The spray blew about and spun prisms, fine as floss, to hang glancing in air and vanish.

She knew again the splendor of driving at night, alone, with no objective, no starting point, just swinging through darkness, glimpsing life in little islands

of light: Sara Jeannot's bright party; lovers on a park bench; a woman touching her husband's hair in a cut-to-pattern house in Lorraine Terrace, even a careless flagman leaning with grace in the door of a hut, golden as a jack-o'-lantern in the dark.

She saw every bright and beautiful thing she had ever loved.

She saw peonies in decorator's baskets taller than she, such baskets as had stood about her home the night that she was married. She saw the peonies distinctly and pressed her face up toward them. She saw, beyond them, long tables filled with many glittering things. She went and lifted a tiny fat bowl. It was a Chinese bowl. She fondled it and her palm knew the soft caress of its curve like a baby's cheek.

She saw sunsets from the porch of a little place in the Catskills, where she had spent three girlhood summers. She saw a peach orchard and a cow that moved, lowing, through it. She saw the lawn of the earliest home that she remembered; saw the shade and sunlight, the grass, the honeysuckle on the fence.

Her eyes clung to that picture, clung and clung, because she knew there was none beyond it.

In the middle of the lawn there stood, like a Maypole, a peeled cedar with dangling ropes. So did she cling to this picture that she drew into it a crowd of children, shouting. The cedar pole wasn't a Maypole. It was a circular swing. Smooth rods hung laterally at the lower ends of the ropes, rods you could hold to tightly. The ropes depended from a steel bar that revolved at the top of the pole, so that you could swing round and round and yet never twist yourself about the pole.

Lilla caught one rope; a boy caught another, a boy with little blue anchors printed on his blouse. They swung. All the ecstasy of that swinging Lilla knew again, looking deep into the flaming core

of life. She knew the bound from earth, hands fast to the stick above her head, body outflung, eyes on the clouds, and the sense of flying; then the touch of earth with the tips of toes, and out and up. Faster.

Oh, it really was like flying—alone in air—

Sudden horror printed itself on children's faces. Lilla saw them so plainly she could have named the children, six in all. What were they afraid of? Fear made their faces ugly. She tried not to look at them; tried to look at the sky and a blowing bough instead.

But somehow she couldn't quite shut out their faces, couldn't quite drown dread, because she had to realize it was Lilla they were afraid for. The rope was breaking and Lilla would fall. It would hurt. She knew that because the children were covering their eyes with their hands. Falling, Lilla saw them change.

They weren't children, nor were there six. Two, only two people printed Lilla's danger in ugly lines upon their faces, two people in a car just grinding to a halt; a young man—rather a cheap young man in a red necktie—and a young woman with cornflowers on her hat and a bundle in her arms. Lilla saw the mud on their car; saw, beyond, the road to the city lose itself in shadow; saw and noted with surprise another road leading away from it at right angles, a road hugging the railroad tracks, never noticed before, but a road swimming now in light.

Lilla saw everything sharp and distinct in a blue-white glare.

The woman's bundle was wrapped in a pink blanket with nursery figures stamped on it. The bundle was her baby. The stamped nursery figures were rabbits.

Gas or reverse, Lilla? Quick. Quick. Gas or reverse?

Indecision is, if you'll pardon my saying so, a fatal failing. There is a

parable about that, a fable, quite a funny fable about—something about one's having only to make up one's mind to save dying.

Gas or reverse?

Came a roar as of planets rushing. If Lilla didn't act quickly, she was going to be killed, she was going to be run over by a train.

The way she knew was that a man clapped his hands to his face, and a woman buried her eyes against her baby. Fear makes people ugly. Lilla wished she needn't see them. She wished to go on looking into that white radiance which broke like spray into all the things she had singly loved and wanted more of, broke into a thousand prisms to hover and glance and stab her with beauty.

Double darkness lay over the railroad crossing. There was the darkness which is night, and there was the blank left by the sudden passing of light. The road which the tracks cut in two showed dimly, the bit forward dark beneath the pale phosphorescence of the sky, the bit backward scarcely lighter under the hut swung like a lantern—both bits dark. You may look at one; you may look at the other. They are two bits of one dark road. The road leads from Tony to Harvey—and Alberta—or, if you like, it leads from Harvey and Alberta to Tony. In any case, Harvey, Alberta, Tony, as they really are, not as seen transfigured.

The road showed intolerably drear. How came Lilla to miss escape on the flood tide of radiance? How came her car to be now awry, but untouched, in the tracks between the parted halves of that dreary road?

The very tears that Tony's fable had whipped from her were yet wet upon her cheeks.

Voices punctured the dark, voices of the signalman and a man whose baby

couldn't be got to stop crying. They were talking of some one who had acted promptly to save dying. They said some one had swerved a car into the direction of the train. They called that presence of mind. They said a person without the power of decision would have been killed.

Lilla pressed her hands to her eyes. Why had she done that? Why swerve her car?

Oh, yes, now she remembered. That road! That road swimming in light, that road hugging the railroad tracks, leading at right angles away from the other, leading away forever from the dark way linking Tidewater and the city.

She had impetuously swerved her car toward a new road because it had held in one transfiguring instant all the loveliness life can hold. She bent forward now and strained to see the road again. The double darkness hid it. But it was there. She had seen it. It was the road of a person of decision. It led, past whatever of privation and loneliness, to happiness in the end. It had been granted her to see it swimming in radiance. If it were dark now, day would soon light it.

She dropped her hands to the wheel. In motion she felt her heart tug upward. Almost she could have laughed, flaring her lamps to search out the road of her independence.

She gave not one thought to the fact that it might be imprudent to begin an odyssey for the whole of life with only a thin frock and silk cape for covering, and three crumpled bills in a silly bag for sustenance. She didn't bother as she turned into the new road about anything but getting speed from her motor because, queerly, she was minded to hold in view as long as might be that beacon steadfast to her vision: the train's red tail light like a star of evening low hung in the west.

A Pair of Blue Shoes

By Henry Wysham Lanier

Author of "The Runaway Pearls."



YOUNG CARTIER stopped, panting, to crush a particularly pestiferous, bloodsucking black fly, which was gorging on the back of his neck.

He was soaked with perspiration, scratched and torn and bruised, after his long, cautious crawl through the stiff scrub and across the rocks, rod in hand to be wearisomely threaded through the tortuous, narrow openings in the thick undergrowth ahead, over and over and over. Though the sun was almost ready to drop behind the western ridge, its level rays were fiery in his eyes and on his lacerated face. The mosquitoes seemed merely to enjoy the smudgy clouds of tobacco smoke puffed savagely from his clenched pipe, and their vicious punctures made him wince and mutter language, toughened as he was. He had buried a hook in his thumb, thanks to a devil-possessed hemlock bough, and cut it out, and barked a shin against a lurking boulder concealed in the young growth amid knee-deep, black muck. At the present instant an insistent saw-edge of rock was cruelly abrading his abdomen.

Yet he was completely happy. For there, within easy casting distance, though ten feet below the cleft in the rocks where he rested, was the unalarmed home of the King of the Opalescent River. And young Cartier had a sans-culotte or Roundhead longing to be a regicide.

He peered hungrily past a patch of

heaven-blue violets etherealizing the great gray-lichened rocks, down the yellow-green and foam-white curve of the constricted little stream, as it slid down a groove in the rock face and dove headlong into the transparent, pale-green pool below. So clear was this oval bowl of aquamarine that he could count the pebbles on the bottom, eight feet below the spray-spattered surface.

A stranger would have sworn there was not a fish in it. But Cartier knew that the lord of that pellucid, green demesne was a ravening cannibal, with a wary lurking place of his own, deep beneath a shelving ledge.

Well he remembered his first presentation to his highness just a year before.

That introduction was on a raw, piercing, mountain May day, such a day as makes it seem utter folly to the early Walton to so much as cast a fly unless he be of the right solemnly dedicated votaries. After a blank mile of wading and scrambling down the rugged, boulder-checked hillside, with its succession of rapids and falls, he had flecked a fly with careless pessimism onto this pool from the upper shelf, and had produced an effect as if he had connected the firing wires to a submerged charge of T. N. T.

The giant king trout had grabbed it with a resounding splash that agitated the whole basin, and made one lightning dash the full length of the pool and straight on down the rapids beyond, his

big dorsal sticking out of the water as he cleft the riffles, the while the dumfounded exorcist, who had unwittingly evoked this water jinni, stood mazed and helpless aloft, till his lordship departed for points west, carrying with him young Cartier's pet Silver Doctor and three feet of his only sound leader. Since that day of humiliation he had been waiting for the present moment, as a Sioux brave awaits a chance to lift the reeking scalp which shall blot out his warrior's disgrace.

Still lying flat on his belly, regardless of the toothed rock beneath the tenderest portion of his anatomy, he worked out his cast with infinite care.

A deft, lifting turn of the wrist, a switch backward, and the line, now of the proper reach, serpentine back for the crucial attempt. But at that precise instant the crack of a pistol, followed instantly by a woman's cry from the level meadow around the bend below, smote his startled attention like a rifle bullet.

His taut nerve control snapped. The perfectly directed backcast jerked aside from its one narrow, free path, and the leader and flies gayly twirled themselves into inextricable knots about the needles of a projecting spruce bough.

Cartier paid not even verbal attention to this, the fly fisherman's "black beast," as shattering to poise and self-respect as laying unsuspecting hands on a piece of working fly paper while groping for matches in a dark kitchen.

Dropping his prized fly rod heedlessly on the rocks, he leaped over the fall, and presently touched bottom with one hobnailed foot in the clear pool. In another minute he was on the rocks at the lower end, sputtering, and streaming water from every square inch, but scrambling on downward recklessly, without an instant's pause.

His headlong dash very quickly brought him to the end of the tumbling water around the right-angled bend of

the river. Surprising as was the sight which met his anxious gaze, it made him hurry forward the faster. A couple of hundred yards ahead stood a man, evidently a city "sport," beside a tall girl in wading costume. He held an automatic pointed forward, but there was anxiety and indecision in his very attitude.

Fifty steps away, by the side of the stream, was an odd group. Two girls were in dripping bathing suits. Each held up with difficulty a pair of bulging sacks tied about her waist and hanging to the knees on either side. As he looked a big trout dropped to the ground from the open mouth of one of these sacks.

They huddled together, these bedraggled nymphs, badly frightened. The men with them, tough customers both, were advancing threateningly against the city pair. One brandished a heavy stick; the other gripped his own left shoulder with his right hand and poured out a stream of such foulness as only the degenerate stratum of a run-out country village can conceive or utter. Young Cartier recognized them as familiar figures in the human refuse of Brixton, petty bootleggers, suspected thieves, known rats. He broke into a run.

"Here, what's all this?" he called as he came up, blowing and sloshing.

"Who are you?" demanded the man with the pistol, facing about jerkily. "Another of these infernal poaching scoundrels?"

Cartier set his teeth.

"What do you mean by shooting up men here, especially with a lot of women about?"

"The mangy rascals have been poisoning my trout," retorted the other, his voice squeaky and shaking. "Just after I spent five thousand on getting the stream worth fishing. I wish I'd held on his filthy head instead of his arm."

"Poisoning your trout!"

"Yes, curse them! They put carbide in the water, and when the fish all floated to the surface these wenches waded in and bagged them. I saw the whole business. I'll put the entire gang behind the bars, if it costs me ten thousand dollars." His flabby face was pale with mingled anger and nervous apprehension.

The girl said never a word, but stood apparently ready for anything. She was tall and slim and full of vital energy; a felt hat sat jauntily on the heavy, coiled braid of dark hair; and as the westerling sun flared all about her it struck rich, burnished, coppery glories from the shapely pile. There was something superb in her carriage and her serene adequacy to the situation. "Artemis herself, the virgin huntress," thought Cartier after a swift glance.

"It's a dirty trick," said he; "no doubt about that. But it isn't considered good form up here in Logan County to put bullets into men for poaching fish. If you'll take my advice——"

"When I want your advice I'll send for you," spluttered the other. "Who are you, and what are you doing here, anyhow? Don't you know this whole tract is preserved? Can't you read the 'No Trespass' sign?"

Cartier came closer and spoke low.

"I judge your name is Stein," he observed, ignoring the petulant attack. "If you don't want to view that worthless pair, and the rest of the world, too, from behind the bars yourself, you'd better square them right away. You may get out of it now for fifty dollars. If it comes into court, there'll be civil and criminal suits that'll cost you fifty times that, not to mention providing you with a highly uncomfortable residence."

"I can take care——" Stein began angrily. He stopped short with a yelp of pain as a stone thrown by the unwounded man thudded against his ribs.

"Ah, c'mon, Jake," protested the

other. "It's only Ollie Cartier. Let's give the murderin' kike the boots."

The two made a clumsy rush forward, clubs upraised.

Cartier stepped in between the oncoming pair and the two who awaited them so differently.

"Put up that gun!" he ordered Stein.

The man hesitated, began to bluster. With a swift motion Cartier clamped a wrist in his left hand, wrenched the automatic from his grasp, and thrust it into the bosom of his dripping shirt.

He whirled about and confronted the villagers, who stopped in their tracks.

"Now, you two get out of this," he commanded. "There's large trouble coming to you already for breaking the game laws, but that's nothing to what you'll run into if you don't clear out in a hurry. You know me, Jake Coleman. I've thrashed you before, and I'll do it again. There'll be no more shooting. But if you want the best hiding you ever had in your life, just stick around here two minutes longer."

The two considered the matter. It did not look good to Jake. Cartier's shoulders were full of driving power; his torn and soaked clothing, his stubby chin, his jutting jaw, all had the appearance of bad medicine, even for a man and three quarters. Moreover, Jake remembered only too well the painful results of his last run-in with Ollie, over a hound dog he was beating within an inch of its life. He had no desire to take that dose again.

His partner, however, had no such restraining memory; and he did have a crease on his shoulder from Stein's bullet that burned like a hot iron. He was bound to hurt somebody. He wanted to hear Stein groan as a rib snapped.

Jerking out of his pocket a stone the size of his fist, he swung it underhand at Cartier so swiftly there was no time to dodge. It caught him on the forehead; he sagged at the knees, and went down, limp and sprawled.

There was a long moment's silence. The figure stretched out in the long grass looked horribly lifeless. Stein's strained nerves gave way. He broke into hysterical, animallike whimpering.

At that betraying sound, the girl beside him started. One flashing glance, and her face set determinedly. She moved swiftly forward, as perfectly adjusted machinery moves when the gears are thrown in. Almost before the others realized she had started she was crouched beside the prostrate Cartier, his head resting on her lap.

"Get some water," she directed coolly.

Jake shuffled his awkward feet, half minded to obey the superior intellect. He saw visions of consequences, and a court where he was already too well known; and he ardently desired a friend at court, in case—

"Water, hell!" exclaimed the wounded man. "C'mon, Jake, you white-livered skunk, you. Ain't I put out the only one that 'mounts ter hell rope? You grab that there till I git through with the critter. One arm'll do it, long's I got two feet to bust in his slats."

He started toward Stein, who was somehow back of the crouching figure and the prone one. Instantly the automatic appeared in the girl's hand, pointed up at him over Cartier's body. He froze where he stood, poring out a string of maledictions upon his companion, who was unostentatiously but earnestly crabbing himself out of line.

"You see, now, blast ye, Jake Coleman, what you done with your sneakin', scairt-rabbit ways. Dashed if I don't take it out'n your yaller hide. We'd 'a' had the kike, and the girl too, ye double-blanked, twice-condemned dish-rag."

"I'm going to count ten," announced the girl in even tones. "If either one of you is within range when I finish, I shoot. I can shoot straight, too. One!"

The fellow glared. His face was contorted. The blackened, yellow teeth showed at the lifted, snarling corner of his mouth. Actual flecks of foam appeared on his lips.

"Two. There are five cartridges left. I'll only need two. Three."

Jake wheeled about like a frightened horse and stampeded toward the trail. With a final pyramidal, all-embracing curse, the other turned and backed away slowly.

The two sobbing and shivering girls, straining under their sacks of fish, to which they still clung as ordered by their masters, moved across the deep grass to meet them. There was neither sound nor motion till the four had disappeared behind the tree wall.

"Get some water," said the girl to Stein.

The man came to himself in sulkily shame.

"I haven't—there isn't anything to carry it in," he stammered.

She took off her felt hat. The look of disgust on her face hardened.

"Hurry," said she in the tone of quiet inevitability one uses to a sullen negro servant.

Dull-red spots appeared on the high cheek bones. But Stein obeyed.

The girl bathed the big lump on Cartier's forehead and gently massaged his head with firm, efficient fingers. From some intimate source she produced a strip of white muslin, deftly fashioned a wet compress, tied a neat bandage around the unconscious man's head. With another strip she bathed his temples, and rubbed them with the tips of her fingers while Stein stood by, looking off at the river, biting his finger nails, chewing on his stubby mustache, finally lighting a cigarette.

Cartier regained his senses with a convulsive start. He struggled to rise, but the girl held his head firmly down.

"Here, I'm not a down horse," he muttered, still in the fog.

"Just a minute," said she. "There's nothing broken, and no real danger, I think. But you're in for a bad headache, and you'll be dizzy unless you wait till the circulation starts."

The brilliant black eyes looked up at her impersonal expression.

"What happened? Did he pull a gun?"

"A stone. There it is. But you'll have no trouble in identifying the weapon or the place it struck."

"Where is he?" demanded Cartier, forcing his head from her restraining grasp and getting shakily to his feet. "He deserves an extra licking for that. Where is he?"

"They went away."

"Went away! After putting me out? With a hole in his shoulder not paid for! That doesn't sound like Jase Beals."

She made no answer.

"Well, ma'am, I'm obliged to you, I'm sure. Now I'll give Mr. Stein his automatic again, and ask you to excuse me."

"Willingly, and for keeps," remarked Stein, as Cartier felt in one pocket after another.

He paid no heed. A puzzled look spread over his face.

"That's funny. Did those rascals get that gun while I was listening to the birdies?"

"No," said she. "It's all right. I have it."

"You! I see. It was you who stood off Jase. Yes, I see perfectly."

She said nothing. Her clean-cut features betrayed not a thought, even.

"I'll have to say it again. I owe you a not-smashed rib or two—to say nothing of what the lord of the manor, there, owes along the same line. Jase's pet specialty is kicking in ribs. He made a slight mistake once. The broken end pierced the man's lung and he died. So Jase added the liberal education from a few years in State's prison to his

former accomplishments. Nice, pleasant citizen, Jase. Lucky I'm leaving the country. I'd have to kill him some day, and probably go to the chair for ridding Logan of a far worse piece of vermin than all the rattlesnakes on Timberlake Ledge."

Still the girl made no sign. Cartier could have kept on talking an hour for the sheer pleasure of looking at her; but Stein showed symptoms of growing impatience and of a returning, arrogant importance.

"Well, good day," went on the young man cheerfully. "Sorry I made such a poor fist of it. That stone-in-the-pocket trick caught me napping. But you didn't need my help any more than a porky needs help against a hound dog. Good day, Mr. Stein."

The fellow grunted. The girl gave him one level look.

"Good day," she remarked, with that cool impersonality which he found so challenging.

He started off, staggering at first. Presently his throbbing head cleared. By going very slowly, he managed to climb back up the rocks and salvage his rod.

He shook his fist at the too-transparent, green pool.

"Good-by for a while, you king trout," he remarked. "You'll see me again when there won't be any such diverting of attention. So make the most of bossing your stretch of river, old hoss. Some day I'm coming back; then you're my trout; and after that you'll live on a pine board on the cabin wall, and have nothing to do but be admired by everybody who sees you."

Climbing laboriously back up the headlong, narrow, river valley, he reached the familiar trail and struck off through the woods. It was nearly midnight when he arrived at the little cabin on a western spur of the mountain. This, with a gun and a fishing rod, and much curious, unwritten lore of the

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wilds, had been his only inheritance from the father he had buried a month before, though the Cartiers and his mother's people, the Oliviers, had once owned everything for miles down the stream.

And to-morrow he would leave it all. Hardly a sad thought at twenty-four. Out yonder was the big world of active life, where men did important things. On the morrow he was to start on a pioneering expedition the exact reverse of that performed by his ancestors when they trekked here into the mountain wilderness. There was bigger and more exciting game than even king trout down there in the great city.

Besides—it was nothing, of course. A mere fleeting pleasure like the sight of a sunset over Timberlake. It led nowhere. But it was queer how vivid in his mind was that gallant figure, with the sun's glory on her hair and the light of an indomitable spirit on her face.

He took the little square of muslin from his forehead and smoothed it on his powerful, rough hands as gently as a mother handling her babe. So there really were women, at least one woman, like that in the world—a woman who seemed to embody the fancies of a young mind reading the old Greek myths, perfect in face and body, brave and vital; a comrade for the wilderness, even as was divine Artemis to the earth-born hunter, Orion; a being who would make home where she was, afield, or beneath the stars, or by the cabin fire. It made life more exciting, that.

He did not even know her name. Of course, the chances were he'd never see her again. And the certainty was, if he did, she would pass him by as coolly as if to-day's events had been but a dream of a drowsy spring afternoon, stretched upon the grass beneath the sailing, fleecy cloud argosies. She was that kind; she picked her own road.

Still, she must be from the city. Every line of her outfit told that much. And

he was going there. That was something—to dream about, at least. There'd only be five or six million other people in the way of seeing her sometime! And a man got a thrill from glimpsing a ten-tined buck, even if he had no gun.

Again he stroked the square of muslin absent-mindedly. Then he folded and put it away in his battered suit case, got together some scraps of cold supper, made tea, and tumbled into bed.

Like any healthy, outdoor man who's had an active day, he went off to sleep almost as his head settled on the pillow.

But something had been set going in the subconscious, that reservoir of thoughts and feelings which have not had free expression. He dreamed. And in his dreams Artemis stood beside him, that dear, regnant lady of wild woods and oozy marsh. That the virgin huntress should wear short skirt and rubber-cloth waders excited no surprise; were they not, he and she, working down the headlong river, side by side, toward the falls above the King of the Emerald Pool? Anyhow, what room was there in a man's mind or heart for aught save the lilting joy of clambering or striding beside this vital comrade? Her features seemed strangely familiar to his sidelong glances. That, too, was as it must be.

They pressed close along the narrow passage between the two halves of a great cleft rock; and as for an instant his muscles contracted and expanded against hers, morning birds sang among the burgeoning boughs, flowers opened to the sun's soft glance, the racing waters beside them broke into marching music, horns and fifes and oboes.

But what was that recurrent and insistent drumbeat athwart the marching melody? It broke the flowing rhythm, dominated the singing air, drowned it by sheer monotony of iteration. Louder, louder. All the world was silence save that demanding, not-to-be-evaded drum.

Then, suddenly, the timbre changed and flattened. He awoke with a start, and was out of bed instantly. Some one was hammering away at the door with a piece of the firewood stacked there. And he recollected that a flitting thought of Jase and his little ways had caused him to drop the heavy, wooden bar into the socket.

A gush of moonlight came through the small high window and lay in a barred rectangle of silvery radiance on the floor of blackness. Cartier started to light the big home-made, oak-branch candle on the slab table; then changed his mind. If it was Jase, stirred by his smarting arm and smarting, boot-leg liquor to the necessity for "gittin' squar'" with somebody, that natural action would exactly meet the visitor's views. The light would make the man inside an easy mark.

Cartier stole to the door while the regular bang, bang, bang continued, and the heavy oak planks shook under the blows. He made no noise, anyhow, in his thick, woollen stockings.

He listened for a moment, but there was no sound which gave the slightest clew to this unexpected caller's identity. Muscles flexed for a swift leap on the intruder, if mischief was afoot, he whirled the bar upright, jerked the door open, and sprang to one side as the billet of wood, which had served as a knocker, dropped with a thud where he had stood.

A hot wave of anger engulfed him at this evidence that his nocturnal visitor really meant violence. Half-blinded with anger and detestation of the sneaking coward who seemed to him but a more dangerous species of "varmint," he leaped forward savagely at the vague figure which stood there, back to the flooding moon, shadowed by the huge ash his grandfather had refused to cut away when he built the cabin, though its limbs scraped the roof in a gale. His big fists clenched hard. He meant

to teach Jase once for all that stones thrown at him were boomerangs. He'd show the worthless scoundrel—

And then, almost in midair, a startling realization caused him to check and twist violently backward. Like some wild cat that has unwittingly sprung at a porcupine, and decided in the very act that there are pointed reasons for going the other way, he landed on the threshold, half sprawling, in a grotesque posture of reversal.

For the figure which stood there, a silent blot against the tree mass, was a woman. The woman. Even as he looked, and his unbelieving brain strove to adjust itself to the unbelievable eye evidence, a vagrant night breeze swayed a branch overhead; the silver-gilt radiance that brimmed the blue-black sky bowl spilled through. It gleamed palely upon an ivory face, still composed and serene, he noted almost with a flash of antagonism.

Yes, it was she. Even as the exclamation of incredulous surprise broke from his lips he caught a fleeting glimpse of that same *Gloire de Dijon* sheen he had delighted in as she stood in the meadow grass against the flaring splendors of the westering sun, only mellowed and softened to a mystical hue that evokes and colors dreams.

His night vision still walked through the subconscious labyrinth of his mind. He could only stare at her, as one stares at deepest, hidden desires suddenly incarnated in a waking world of harsh realities.

A quivering illumination, like distant heat lightning, made her face flash into momentary visibility as she spoke:

"You protect yourselves well at night up here in the mountain wilderness."

"I thought you—you were Jase," he stammered.

"No, not quite that. Yet he is the cause of this midnight call. For a person described as incurably lazy and shiftless, your Jase has a surprising fac-

ulty of causing intense activity in other people."

Cartier perceived that she had on linen riding breeches, and that she was soaked, and plastered with mud.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "Come in and get dry. You *have* been making acquaintance with our bog holes."

"Perhaps I'd better——" she began. "No, let him wait. That sounds too good to miss."

He hurried inside, picking up the billet of wood as he entered.

"I thought your knocker was another of Jase's playful little tricks," said he, tossing it on the pile of wood in the big stone fireplace.

"I hated to rout out a tired man, but there seemed no help for it," she responded. "And my knuckles proved much softer than your double-plank door."

Swiftly he produced a roaring blaze, drew some fresh water from the spigot in the wooden pipe from the hillside spring, poured two coconut dippers full into the copper kettle hanging from the old crane, and swung it over the blaze. In a moment he had tacked three blankets to the low-hewn rafters and made a screened place in front of the cheerful blaze. From an old painted, wooden chest in the corner he produced woman's garments of a bygone day.

"You'll have to put on some of Granny Olivier's ancient finery, passed on to her daughter," said he. "Your advent marks an epoch in this dwelling: no woman has crossed that threshold for twenty-four years."

She stroked the primly gay gown with gentle fingers. The leaping flames struck those same coppery lights from hair that ordinarily seemed black, threw her slim figure in quaint, flickering shadows against wall and ceiling. She seemed momentarily transformed; something softer, feminine, tenderly responsive to primal emotion, was evoked

by the sight and feel of the speaking old costume. Cartier could hardly restrain himself from taking her into his arms. It was in a businesslike, matter-of-fact, almost stern voice that he spoke:

"Get off those wet things right away and hang them on the drying line. The kettle will be boiling by the time you're ready."

He caught up some clothing and went out past the rough stockade into the cleared patch.

The moon had some quality to-night that was personal, intimate, compelling. Many a time, at every hour from before sunset to after dawn, he had witnessed the transformations wrought by her gentle but irresistible magic in the familiar slopes and rocks and trees. He could see without looking at it the lucent ocean filling the valley with subdued, mystical radiance, the dark islands of black growth bathed in this vaporous luminosity. But on this night the orb'd center of lucency was no serene highness inviting calm thoughts to casual, contemplative wanderings along vague but well-trodden paths. There was some thrilling vibration of anticipatory happenings abroad on the still night air, as if a High One were descending from Valhalla. He shivered and turned back toward the little barred square of light that gleamed between two leafy limbs. It did not seem that he was going away from this unnamed, approaching presence, whose coming sent throbbing, intangible heralds ahead, like the quivering, gold-tipped sun spears thrust far up toward the zenith before his majesty himself tops the horizon. Rather were his feet set to meet the mystery.

His hand shook as he rapped on the door.

"Come in," said the clear, musical voice.

She had donned the old garments and had taken down the blanket walls of her tiring room. Again, in spite of the costume change, she was that removed be-

ing from another sphere. But as Cartier glanced at her and then quickly forced his gaze away he thought he had never seen any human being who could so properly be called adorable. The early-Victorian dress increased her femininity but took nothing from the clean-cut purposefulness, the dignity, the calm surface above deep waters. One could speak ultimate truth to that mind; and, if a man could but find the open sesame that would unbar the tight-closed door, there would be humor, and good companionship, and—he dared not pursue that.

He made tea, disregarding her protests. Even that minute triumph was a satisfaction to some outraged masculine vanity at her self-sufficiency, and to something deeper within him. Observing the eagerness with which she ate the piece of hard-tack brought with the fragrant tea, he got two or three trout from the spring house, fried them with some bacon, and served this savory dish to her with more crackers, and a fresh supply of tea.

She devoted herself for some minutes to the serious business of satisfying hunger.

"I was starved," she confessed. "We left just as dinner was announced, and, while we hadn't accomplished much in those last four or five hours, we spent a lot of energy doing it."

"What happened?"

"Oh, you don't know any of it, do you? I must praise your restraint."

"Get clean, dry, warm, and satisfied internally, then talk is the rule of the woods."

"And a very good rule, I'm inclined to think at present. Well, just as I was getting ready for dinner, Annie, the maid, ran in, fairly boiling over with excitement. Jase had arrived with a deputy sheriff."

"That miserable Ray Miller," murmured Cartier. "They're partners in the Brixton bootlegging trust."

"I see. Fortunately Andy, the Scotchman, had stopped them out at the gate and hurried a boy off to warn Mr. Stein. They were boasting that both he and I would spend the night in Brixton jail, instead of at the Lodge."

"Could do," declared Cartier. "That old scamp Judge Billings is Ray's would-be brother-in-law. He'd probably go the limit. Brixton's pretty well out of the world, anyhow. And, of course, Stein had let himself in for it by his foolishness."

"He had that notion himself," observed the girl coolly. "I'd slipped on those things, not knowing what to expect, and found him downstairs struggling into a pair of rubber boots. He had only one idea: to get back to the city and put the whole affair in the hands of Mr. Goldbeck. It seems that gentleman had, against all the probabilities, kept him out of jail once before in some matter of tangled finance, and his confidence in him is boundless. 'Goldbeck'll take care of it. Hurry,' was what he kept repeating. There's a through train that stops for water at Coble's Mills at five-thirty in the morning, and Lew Walker, the guide, declared the only way was to strike across the mountain on foot."

"He was right about that. The only road runs down the valley, and they'd stop anything there easy."

"Yes. I saw that. I didn't see, though, just where I came into any such runaway expedition. I was for facing them and fighting it in the open. But Mr. Stein saw Goldbeck as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land; and Lew declared that both men and the girls would swear I was an active party to the shooting, as it would be four against two, and the result would be a foregone conclusion with a Brixton justice."

"No doubt about that," remarked Cartier grimly.

"Even then I couldn't see it. But

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when Aunt Lucretia came down, in her most becoming, blue-silk negligee, and burst into tears and begged me not to disgrace the family by letting myself be arrested, I gave up. So we started off with Lew to guide us. We could hear the loud voices of those two demanding to be let in at once, as we crept along the hill path to the foot-bridge, and Andy's Scotch burr as he delayed them on some pretext. He gets Scotchier and Scotchier when he's excited inside, till at last you need a glossary to understand half he's saying."

"And that needs to be interpreted by a character key to get at his real meaning. Yes, I know Andy."

"The rest is a bit monotonous. About midnight, as Lew remarked disgustedly, we'd covered in four hours about the distance a man with a broken leg could crawl in that time. We were by the big rock at the fork of the stream."

"Pinnacle Rock."

"Yes, that was the place. There's rather a nasty bit there in the dark, and Mr. Stein got nervous where you have to ease yourself down from one ledge to another. He called out to us he couldn't get down by himself. So Lew went back to help him. I waited where I was, across the foot log."

"I don't know yet just what happened. There was a yell and the sound of a fall. I hurried back and struck a match. Mr. Stein was picking himself up at the foot of the ledges. Lew was underneath, his leg twisted back under him. 'Little fool grabbed me round the neck,' he muttered. Then he fainted. I found his knee was out of joint. We had quite a time getting it back. At last, though, it was fixed up and bandaged, and we brought him to. He explained there was no chance then for us to get across, except to find your cabin and ask you to guide us. So I got careful directions—and here I am."

"How did you find your way?"

"Lew was very explicit. And I came

slowly through the woods, tying a piece of white cloth every little way so as not to get turned around."

"Pretty fair for a girl who doesn't know this country. Where is Stein?"

"He didn't like it down there where your path runs along the edge of the cliff."

Cartier grunted.

"So you left Lew at Pinnacle Rock, and Stein at Knife-edge, did you? Well, you go lie down a while, and I'll pick up what you've dropped."

He dragged the blankets off the army cot in front of the large western window looking out over the cliff, and spread over it the two big white wolf-skins, which commemorated his boyhood trip to Western Canada.

"Now," said he, "get some rest. This'll take some time. And you've got a rough journey ahead of you still, if we go on with this wild-goose chase."

She looked at him appraisingly, then rose, still scrutinizing the bulking strength of him. So charming and moving a sight was she in the candlelight, against the background of hewn logs and primitive furniture, that the question pervading Cartier's whole being rose on the crest of his feeling, as the tide surges up beneath the potent spell of the clear moon.

"Look here," he demanded brusquely. "Are you going to marry that Stein?"

Her arched eyebrows arched still further.

"Oh, I know," he broke out. "It's none of my business. It's impertinent and inexcusable. But I'll probably have to carry the little beast past Knife-edge, and lug him halfway to Coble's Mills. Call the information guide's pay."

Once more she studied his flushed face.

"I'm not familiar with mountain customs," she remarked. "Is it considered up here that a girl accepts a man because she accepts his hospitality, as a

member of a house party, with her aunt?"

"He thinks you are," persisted Cartier.

"Even Napoleonic financiers have been known to make mistakes when they dealt with women instead of bonds."

"It'd be bonds, all right," he muttered. "Good Lord! That kind of man buys a wife just as he buys a fishing preserve."

"Surely you'll admit, though, that he is a prize exhibit in the matrimonial market. I've been told day and night he's a catch any girl might be proud of making."

Impolite language was the man's only comment.

"And as to buying a wife: haven't women in what is called good society always been bought by money or position? The few exceptions are pointed out to us as horrible examples, not to be associated with at peril of our own reputations."

He merely gazed at her.

"So, admitting the barter and sale as an accepted, common-sense working principle, think of the price! Aunt Lucretia informed me only yesterday that he offered to settle three millions on me. Think of it: three million dollars! My little brother Tom sold a tailless bantam rooster he'd raised at a price which he proudly figured was two hundred dollars a pound. No good, the bantam, except to look at. Here I'm offered, let me see—yes, almost exactly twenty-five thousand a pound for myself. It's a luxury price, certainly."

"I'd about as soon see you married to Jase," said Cartier.

"His offer would be stolen trout and smuggled wood alcohol. Well, since poor Lew is waiting out by the Rock, I'll relieve your mind—it's very kind of you, I'm sure, to be so interested in my affairs—by informing you that I haven't the slightest intention of marrying either of the gentlemen."

10—Ains.

Cartier went out into the checkered night, feeling like a pup who has grabbed at his dog biscuit, and, in consequence, has been made to remain statue-like indefinitely, with the coveted morsel resting on his twitching nose.

It was easy to find Lew. He went by a familiar short cut that avoided Stein's stopping place, and was soon descending the stony slope to the bottom land between the hill and Pinnacle Rock. The dark bundle beneath the hemlock at the foot of the ledges stirred as Cartier approached. A white face turned up to the moonlight, jaws set.

"Gee, Ollie, this is coarse," came through tight lips.

"Tough luck, old man. Turning the screws on you, is it?"

"Oh, hell, yes. Feels's if I'd been took apart and botched together by clumsy Yonson. But that part's all right. That ain't what hurts. Say, she got through all right, didn't she?"

"Came through like a deer born and brought up between Moose Meadow and Timberlake."

"She is sure one bird," remarked Lew.

"Flies high when she's a mind to. Now, how about this knee?"

He dropped beside the prostrate man and ran his strong fingers over the injured leg.

"She put it back, I tell you," declared Lew. "There was me, the sweat pouring out all over me, and that little rat squeaking—not so much as a bunch of hide scraped off'n him, cuss the luck—and she's cool and airy as a peewee picking bugs out'n the air, not only bossing the job but doing it her own self. Grabbed that ankle of mine and told me to hold tight. Hold tight! Hell, if it'd been old Doc Grimstead, I'd of gone off cuckoo at anything touching that billy-be-damned leg. But shucks! When I looked up and saw them big eyes and what was in 'em—why, a feller couldn't do nawthin' but spit on his

hands and take a fresh holt. And then she give one yank, and there was a click, and it was a little wuss'n when that danged she-b'ar tried to chew me apart up on Rattlesnake. That was the last thing I knowed till I heard her saying: 'Righto. You'll do nicely now. I must find that cabin. Tell me again about that twist in the trail through the hemlocks.' Say, Ollie, do you s'pose thar's any more like her out yonder?"

"Doubt it," remarked Cartier tersely.

His big arms went about the injured man and gently lifted him upright. Then he shifted, so that his right arm gripped him, hand under the shoulder pit.

"How about it?" he inquired, advancing one foot.

Lew's teeth grited. Big drops beaded his forehead. He made a desperate effort, took two steps, and collapsed against the supporting arm.

"Thought so," said Cartier. "It's a case of backing." He eased the panting guide to the earth again.

"Backing! You plumb fool, you can't back me over that there trail to-night."

"Can do," replied Cartier. "No wire entanglements, no dead horses, no shell holes, no shrapnel. Cinch."

A score of times in the next hour he was close to admitting that Lew's emphatic statement was correct. There were times when every muscle in him seemed to be crying out in angry or sulky protest, asserting that it could and would do no more. When he reached the crest of the second hill he would have given nearly anything just to drop this burden, which had become a veritable Old Man of the Sea. He hated the helpless Lew. There were moments when the only thing that kept him going was an angry pride, and the determination to prove to the old fool that he didn't know everything.

Thus he drew near to the narrow shelf along the cliff wall that was called Knife-edge.

And then a feeble, hoarse, wailing voice hailed them from the bushy plateau at that end of the passage. Stein sat on a log and slapped at mosquitoes.

"Good heavens! I thought you would never come. How did you get past without my seeing you?" was his greeting.

"Never mind about that. Follow me close," said Cartier shortly.

"Not across that. How can you expect a man like me to risk his life on such a crazy path at night?"

"Mighty little risk," returned Cartier ambiguously. "Come or stay as you choose. I'm going, and I don't feel like talking. You'll have company before long if you do stay. Jase and Ray ought to be along any time."

Stein started.

"You don't mean you think they'll follow us up here!"

"Listen," said Cartier, squatting back to a down tree and resting his burden on the prostrate trunk. "I've got about as much use for Jase as for a rattler; but he's no fool, and he knows these hills about as well as any man living. He had an Indian grandmother, and about the only thing he'll stick to are whisky and getting even. Better stay and have it out——"

But Stein was already on his feet and pushing his way through the scrub toward the cliff.

They reached the cabin. Cartier's trembling knees gave way as he lowered his human load to safety, and he fell in a heap, while Lew tried every piece of profanity in his varied vocabulary in the effort to reduce internal pressure of emotions.

Cartier was up on his feet again as he saw Stein pressing forward to enter. Shoving the little man roughly to one side, he knocked.

"Come in," said the voice he had been waiting to hear again.

There was something about coming

back in the night and hearing it from within that dwelling which pulsed through his veins, sweeping away his exhaustion in a flood of aroused vitality. He opened the door and saw that she had changed back to her own clothes and had rebuilt the fire. The kettle was boiling, and food was on the table.

He lifted Lew in, and he and the girl made him comfortable in one of the wall bunks. Hardly had the petulant demand for food been satisfied when the man was sleeping heavily.

Stein, too, had wolfed down what he could help himself to. "Let's go along, then," said Cartier. "It will take us a while to make the railroad. And I don't want to have to stand off Jase and Ray, in addition to our other troubles."

"Nonsense," broke in Stein hastily. "They couldn't get up here in the dark, even if they'd known where we were going to land, which we didn't ourselves."

"No, I don't suppose Jase could go where you've been. Just the same, Miss —" He looked a question, but she made no response. "Just the same, if you're fit to travel, I'd advise starting right away."

"I? Yes, I can make it. I suppose you're sure you can find the way at night? And you're willing to guide us across?"

"I'm willing to help do anything on earth you really wish to do. I've been paid already," he added.

She inclined her head gravely, and picked up the small knapsack she had carried.

"Look here," began Stein. "I don't know just what you're talking about. But when we do go on, now or later, which I haven't decided yet, I'm paying you for taking us there. I know only too well how you people up here gouge a man when you think you have him in a corner, but I'm paying anything you have the nerve to ask—when

we go." He stopped abruptly. "What's the matter with you?" he demanded angrily.

For Cartier was bent forward toward the entrance, apparently concentrated on listening to something outside.

The latter's reply was to blow out the candle, douse the flames in the fireplace with a bucket of water, and, darting noiselessly to the door, swing the great wooden bar about till the end sank home in the socket—all in one movement, as it seemed.

"What the devil——" began Stein in a nervously indignant voice.

"Shut up, you fool," whispered Cartier savagely. "This way, miss—toward the big window. You, too; and be quiet if you can."

They heard him moving softly, but swiftly, heard the creak of long-unused hinges. Then they stood beside him, before a blacker square in the dark floor. Into this he stepped and descended.

"Now, ma'am, come close to the edge and turn around."

The girl obeyed.

"Stretch down your left foot."

She felt a firm hand grasp her foot and guide it to the rung of a ladder. The operation was repeated. She climbed down a dozen steps by herself, conscious that he was waiting in readiness in case she slipped. She found herself on a rock floor in total darkness.

"Come on down," Cartier called softly upward.

Her arm was grasped and she was led twenty steps off. Seemingly, then, they rounded a projecting buttress of rock. The moonlit night sky appeared through a narrow slit in the blackness.

"An old bear's den, this was," explained Cartier softly. "There were still Indian raiding parties when grandfather came up here, and he found it handy more than once to have a back door like a woodchuck."

Still grasping her arm, he passed out of the opening. They stood on a three-foot ledge along the rock wall, sloping gradually downward.

They had not taken ten steps when Stein's querulous voice was heard behind. His alarm made him forget caution.

"Say," he complained; "I'm no giddy goat. Strike a match at least before we all break our necks."

Cartier swore beneath his breath as a shout sounded from overhead. One of the pursuers fired out of the window, and they heard the whine of the bullet through the air. He hurried the girl forward at a reckless pace, and did not check until they were well within the shelter of the stunted pines and oaks.

"I'm sorry," said he to the girl, "but that upsets my whole plan. We can't get back into the trail now. They'll be watching that, sure as shooting. We've got to go as the eagle flies, straight over the main ridge and slanting down the other side. Shorter, but bad going at night. Still game for it?"

"Of course," said she. "For anything that's necessary."

That was a hard journey. She could never have made it but for the assistance of the man who always seemed to be at the precise spot necessary when help was needed. Half a dozen times he lifted her bodily up or down an obstructing boulder, and she met his aid with an instant comprehension and acceptance that delighted him.

As for Stein, the party had to halt again and again to let him catch his breath, or rest his exhausted muscles, or nurse scratches and bruises. He was a battered, disreputable figure when they saw ahead the water tank shining in the level rays of the sunrise.

Cartier routed out the section hand, who with his new wife occupied a room-and-a-half board shack beside the track. The new wife took the girl into her partly-partitioned boudoir and

mothered her, while the man made strong coffee, and Stein, on a chair outside, ineffectually attempted to repair the most conspicuous damage to his clothing and epidermis.

He made one final effort presently to regain his proper position.

"Well," said he, his hand in his pocket, "how much? What I say I stand by."

"You don't owe me anything," replied Cartier.

"Don't owe you anything! I hired you to guide us across, didn't I?"

"I didn't guide you," retorted the younger man. "I brought the lady over because she wanted to come. If you chose to take advantage of that, it's none of my affair."

"But I prefer to pay you," insisted Stein.

"Oh, go back where you belong," exclaimed Cartier. "You and your filthy dollars, too."

He walked away to a spring he remembered and cooled off. In fact, after an impromptu bath in the clear, gushing stream below, he returned feeling on top of the world.

She was going, but neither she nor the little beast nor anybody else could take away from him what was his, what had made life over for him. For a little time he had fed her, and clothed her in garments of many memories, and helped her in stress, and held her momentarily in his arms. Whatever blank stretch came next, that was something which had been beyond his wildest dreams a few hours before. And the future was still to unroll, with assistance from every power within him. It was good.

She met him with a steaming cup of coffee. Stein was not visible.

"Drink that," she ordered, like a doctor prescribing to a patient. "The train will be here in five minutes, and we must be on the spot. Mrs. Cassidy will have some breakfast for you afterward."

He gulped it down, tasting an ichor.

She had thought of him, no matter how impersonally. Side by side they walked to the spot pointed out by Cassidy as probably opposite the sleeping cars when the train should draw up.

Not a word passed between them until they saw Stein hurry out of the shack where he had been shaving, and start toward them with the section hand.

The shriek of the locomotive sounded away to the north. Stein broke into a run, though Cassidy yelled after him there was "loads av time."

"We've given you a broken night's rest and a lot of work and a long hard trip—all for nothing, from your point of view," she remarked.

"I'm satisfied," said Cartier.

He was suddenly smitten with the conviction that he was a double-dyed idiot. Here he was all prepared to go to the city himself this very day, and he could just as well have put a pack on his back, coming across with them, and taken this train. Old Bouvier would have shipped his trunk after him. Now she'd escape from his sight, and he might never find her again.

The express roared down upon them, slowly came to a grinding, jarring halt.

At Cassidy's signal a negro porter grudgingly opened the door of the nearest car. The girl looked at the step, three feet above where she stood. In a flash Cartier had picked her up and set her gently on it. Cassidy hoisted Stein up after her. They disappeared within. He could hear Stein's high voice berating the porter for not putting down something for them to mount by.

The train moved on. He scanned each window for a last glimpse of her to carry away with him. Nothing.

Then his heart missed a beat. She stood in the rear vestibule of the car they had entered, looking out at him

through the door which she had opened without raising the movable platform. As the car rattled by she threw up one hand high above her head. He was within a hair's breadth of leaping up and trying to swing himself aboard as he answered the salute.

The scale was turned by a little white ball that sailed out through the doorway right at him. Instinctively he caught it with his right hand, and clenched it tight, never taking his eyes off her face till the train swung round the curve.

Then, with a deep breath, he unrolled the paper, regardless of round-eyed Cassidy. It was a leaf from the back of a cheap book. On it was written, in a firm, clear hand: "I really must thank you—for everything."

The only signature was a rapid sketch, recognizable at a glance, of her own face.

Cartier tucked it into his breast, declined breakfast at the shack, and strode off by the short route over the mountain. He hardly saw the familiar scenes he was presently leaving. His only conscious thoughts were speculations as to whether he could hustle enough to catch the earlier train from Brixton Junction to the city.

"And if I don't find her, I'll advertise," he vowed half humorously, "or hire a detective to worm her name and address out of Stein."

Before the express had reached the metropolis he was aboard the combination car at Brixton Junction. Ostensibly he was off to seek a living in the monstrous congeries of complex activities where the rivers and the sea dispute the right of way.

Really—well, even yet he did not dare to admit it. But way down inside he knew only too well what his job was.

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The Unfinished Picture

By Julian Oliver



IN the cold, spring light that came into the studio through the glazing overhead, Lang was painting Helva. His wife, poised on an imaginary piling, stood in a blue bathing suit, waving her blue cap at some one on a far, sunny shore. Her hair, with its shining lights, flowed back in the stirring of a fancied breeze.

Lang painted her with practiced hand. Almost without looking toward her, he drew in the fine, high curve of her breast, the lift of her head, the strength of her young body. Then he splashed on color; blue of the sea and sky, blue of her eyes, gold of her hair.

"That will do, Helva," he said at last almost inaudibly.

He heard her spring down from her pedestal. The rustle of silk told him, as he went on painting, that she was putting on the magenta and blue robe that came from China. He heard her strike a match to light the samovar, and then the pad of her sandaled feet as she went over to one of four, high, Gothic windows, to look out upon the bleak, northward reach of the Park.

In a moment she came, and stood behind him, watching the sure strokes of his brush, the easy flow of color, the swift achievement of the effect that any one would know for Lang's.

With a sidewise glance of approval, Lang flung down the last, moist brush, and, taking the deep chair of leisure, lighted an opulent cigarette.

"Any mail?" he asked, exhaling a blue cloud.

"I haven't opened it yet," answered Helva.

He watched her, by the low table that served for his desk, sort the letters into piles. She had the instinct for the interesting. She slit an envelope and read.

"Aunt Katherine's sending a young man to-day."

Lang nodded, bored.

"Another young man, who wishes me to teach him how to sell his pictures entitled 'Cows Drinking,' and 'The Harvest.' Well, I'll try to set him right. But what's up now, Helva?"

She had cast Mrs. Norden's letter aside, and was reading something on thick, creamy paper that made the color come into her cheeks, and her breath quicken.

"We've been invited to the Conways' for the week-end," she said slowly, so that the significance of her words might carry.

Lang's half-consumed cigarette stopped on the way to his lips.

"Conways?" he echoed, not believing that he had heard.

"Yes. Henry Conway."

"And you think that means——"

"That's Conway's method. Yes, I think he wants you."

Lang put out his hand.

"Let's see the invitation."

He read that Henry Conway, publisher of newspapers and magazines, of

dailies, weeklies, monthlies, requested the pleasure of his company for the week-end.

"The pleasure of your company," he read aloud, and, smiling, added: "And the pulling power of the water-color girl, eh, Helva?"

Helva bowed like a prima donna accepting roses from her impressario.

"We're irresistible," she laughed, and then suddenly broke off, as an electric bell sounded faintly in the butler's pantry.

Presently a maid, who spoke English with the carefully preserved accent of a Parisian, announced that Mr. Aldridge had arrived.

"That's Aunt Katherine's young man," said Helva.

"Wait two minutes, then. I'll see him here," Lang told the maid. "Now, Helva," he continued, turning to his wife, "you'll have to coach me quickly. One of your aunt's young men, just out of art school, Paris—and what else?"

"He wishes to be a great painter," Helva laughed.

"Then, tell me, Helva, has he come to the right place?"

Lang smiled at his own grandiloquent immodesty. And yet, the idea was not wholly absurd. The youth, who wanted to be great, might have traveled not so far when he should be thirty-five. The polished floor of his studio with its ingenious parquetry, the leaded, Gothic windows with the stretch of Park below them and beyond them, the silken hangings, the deep rugs, the ivories and jades, and, finally, the invitation to Henry Conway's country house, lying there on the table—were they not all testimonials to Lang's success?

But the maid was ushering young Aldridge in.

"This is awfully good of you," the youth said, gripping the hand Lang offered him. "I know you are going to help tremendously."

He was an amusing young man—yes,

that was the word. He had the sort of eyes a man had, who thought truth beauty and the other way around, a poet's eyes, clear, gray, full of illusions, young. They followed Helva, busy with the tea—who did look beautiful in that costume—and then came dutifully back to Lang.

"I've come to see your pictures," said the boy.

Lang only smiled at that—a deprecating smile, he tried to make it.

Helva said:

"We'll have the grand tour after tea, but, while we're waiting, look at that one he's just done."

The boy crossed over to the bathing girl, and stood regarding its blue and gold. It came out tremendously: the cool effect of it, the perfect contrast of the colors, the symmetry of the design. And it was truly Lang. The magazine that bought it need not, though it would, print Lang's name in big letters on the cover. The picture would say Lang more eloquently than letters.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said Helva, drawing the tea.

The boy looked back at her, then at the picture, before he spoke appraisingly.

"It's good," he answered, "but I want to see the others."

The boy was most amusing. Lang half fancied telling him what sort of check would come to pay for the bathing girl, half fancied showing him the invitation for the week-end. Though, of course, he only smiled.

But Helva seemed actually to care. Lang, touching up the bathing girl, watched her as conductor of the grand tour, or, rather, he was vaguely conscious of her as she took the boy about the room, pointing to the pictures. They stopped in front of Helva with a rose, and Helva at tennis, and Helva at golf, and Helva in riding breeches. Really, Lang believed Helva was showing him the picture Lang had done for

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the hosiery advertisement. It was good, of course, but why include it in the tour? Now they were looking at one of Helva with a teacup: blue frock, blue-luster teacup, blue-luster eyes.

Then Lang heard them at the cabinet, where the efforts of his impoverished yesterdays were gathering to-day's affluent dust. He couldn't hear what the boy was saying—which naturally made no difference—but he heard Helva's tentative rejoinder.

"There are some others, shut up here, that you might like," said Helva. "He was quite young when he did them, but I think——"

Her voice trailed off. It had a wistful sound, however, as if the old, starving days were posthumously filled with her desire.

They were taking pictures out, and setting them on an easel.

"Yes, I like these," said the boy.

Lang didn't look, of course. He stared out of a Gothic window up the vast distance of Central Park.

Then the boy's voice broke in, raised, excited.

"Why, that's great," said young Aldridge. "But he didn't finish it! Why didn't he?"

"Oh, he's going to," said Helva, as if she were justifying Lang. He's always meant to finish it."

Lang found her staring at the picture after the boy had gone. It was that painting of Helva by the sea, done in his youth. He could remember stopping by a boulder while he made the first sketch for it on one of the little boards he carried in his kit; discovering that Helva's eyes were the color of the sea far out beyond the combers, that her hair had the vitality of sunlight.

He looked involuntarily back at the water-color picture he had done to-day, the one the boy had slighted at the start, then once again at the piece in oil, that had excited young Aldridge's admiration. Really, it was quite good; crude,

perhaps, certainly and obviously unfinished, yet having a quality of life, some of life's fire. The colors were quite good. Even in the dusk that was now descending over the rich interior of the studio, he got glimpses of that bright day when he had begun the painting, and the light that had been over the sea. Sometime, when he had leisure, he might take it up and finish it.

"Why don't you finish it?" said Helva.

"You don't mean now?" said Lang, startled out of his reverie.

"Yes, now," said Helva queerly.

"Not with Conway calling for water-color stuff," he laughed.

She was absurd.

It was unbelievable that the big chance had come, and yet on Friday he was undeniably being whirled toward Conway's, on the wheels of his own motor car.

It was a brilliant afternoon. The warmth of an early spring was in the breeze that whipped up East River, as the motor went racing across the bridge. Manhattan, behind him, was a magic city of sun-tipped towers; and before him, beyond the commercial dinginess of the other shore, stretched the open country of Long Island.

"It will be a gorgeous week-end," Helva said.

"Those clouds there, the puffy, white ones," said young Aldridge, "I should like to paint them from under the bridge."

Lang was not unreservedly glad to have the boy along, but Conway's invitation had said to bring another man, and it had seemed unkind not to bring the fledgling, particularly since Helva had insisted.

Lang leaned back luxuriously to taste the air, as it sweetened farther away from the city, to sense the rhythm of the car, speeding smoothly, without noise, almost without vibration, toward

the objective house of Conway. He glimpsed wooded knolls, and lawns with the new grass pushing up out of the brown earth, and gates with houses set far back of them.

Helva was not noticing. She was talking to the boy, or, rather, listening to him. The boy was still on clouds. He liked the snowball kind, it seemed; he'd made a study of clouds; perhaps had a lecture on clouds he had seen, Lang thought humorously.

There was a small, French château ahead, set in the midst of a formal garden. It had a view, Lang noted. It was the sort of place he'd dreamed of having for his own. If Conway came across, Lang might have his dream immediately.

"Look, Helva," he directed.

"Yes," said Helva, with her mind still on the clouds.

"It's too late now," muttered Lang.

The house was hidden suddenly behind trees. There was a sign, however, on the wall that boarded the road. "For Sale," it said. Lang wrote down the agent's name, his telephone number, and his address in town.

But Helva didn't notice. She was still listening to Aldridge, who, having exhausted the subject of clouds, was talking about the mediums of painting: oil, water color and pastel.

"Mr. Lang should work in oils," he said. "His oils are decidedly the best of his pictures. And, I say, Mr. Lang, you're going to finish that one of Mrs. Lang—the sea thing, don't you know?"

"Yes, I know," said Lang, "and, yes, I am going to finish it."

"And you don't mind my saying oil's your medium?"

"Of course I don't," Lang answered.

What Lang hated was the boy's damned egotism, thinking his opinion mattered one way or another.

Lang faced the other way, his ears hungering for the silence that belonged with the country landscape all about

him. Why would people talk—particularly that twaddle about art? Their talk betrayed their ignorance, their posing amateurishness.

He couldn't shut it out.

"It's really quite wonderful," the boy was saying, still on the unfinished picture. "It's not a portrait, not a landscape, though it shows you with the sea behind you. It's the picture of a *thing* Lang saw that day, an effect of light, perhaps, or color—something he may not know, himself. But am I talking rot?"

"You are," Lang yearned to tell him. But, of course, he choked the words back.

Helva murmured:

"No, indeed."

The fault was really Helva's. She encouraged the boy to talk like that. Would Lang have to endure it the whole week-end, at a time when he needed all of his nervous forces, all of his intellect, to meet Conway? This was no junket. It was a business engagement, with the color of it showing. How could he think, with this kindergarten prattle disturbing his tranquillity? Instead of being rested by the drive, he was only annoyed. And there ahead of him, with its towers and turrets, was Conway's house, the climactic destination of his symbolic drive.

"Why did you make me bring that boy?" he demanded of his wife when he and Helva were ensconced in the too-magnificent suite, which Conway reserved for distinguished guests.

"What has he done?"

Helva turned her blue eyes on him, wide, surprised, as if she didn't understand at all.

"It isn't what he's done," said Lang, controlling his voice. "It's the way he talks—that gabbling about art. If he gets on Conway's nerves, the jig's up. Conway won't stand for it, Helva, and he'll hold me responsible because I brought him."

"What have I to do with what Mr. Aldridge says?" asked Helva, with that maddening detachment she knew how to assume.

"You know very well," said Lang.

It was an hour before dinner. Lang shut himself in his room to think. Would Conway wish him to sign a contract, or merely to submit his stuff? Would Conway talk business frankly, or pretend that the week-end was merely social?

On the latter point, Lang's mind was relieved early, for hardly were the cock-tails drunk in the drawing-room before Conway sauntered heavily up to him, and said:

"We'll have our talk to-night."

This frankness of Conway's pleased him. It was better than pretending, even when it seemed a little vulgar.

Lang, at Mrs. Conway's right, murmuring to his hostess, and smiling at her obvious sallies, faced young Aldridge, sitting across the table with Conway's only daughter. Lucky devil, Aldridge, to be brought here without waiting, without effort, without striving. How different had been Lang's own beginning! He had married Helva, to be sure, and that fact he wouldn't change. But Aldridge—lucky devil.

It was a small party. There were only the Conways, and the Langs, and Aldridge, and a rather fascinating woman called Mrs. Cather, in whom Conway seemed particularly interested.

"That was a corking cover on 'Mode' last week," boomed Conway's voice through a sudden silence.

Lang flushed with pleasure. He had had to wait, perhaps, to struggle slowly, but he was here at last, listening to Conway's frank praise of his work.

"I didn't see it," put in Aldridge.

Lang forbade the frown. But no one had asked the boy if he had seen the cover. Couldn't he keep quiet?

"It was a sort of green and yellow poster thing," said Helva.

"See it on the stands a mile off," came Conway's laudatory growl.

"Oh," said Aldridge, "that sort of thing."

There was the unmistakable quality of condescension in his voice. Lang recognized it, of course. But Conway—would he sense it, and resent it? Lang looked at his heavy face, the beligerent thrust of his jaw, the rise of color.

"Yes," said Conway, "that's the sort of thing I mean. That's what a magazine wants."

"It isn't art," said Aldridge.

"I suppose a million readers——" Conway answered, growing redder. Then he broke off suddenly and laughed. "Let us ask the leading authority on art—the artist's model. Mrs. Lang——"

It had promised to be rather sickening, but Lang breathed easier, now. He was glad he had warned Helva. It would have been grotesque if she had taken the boy's part. And then:

"I think I must agree with Mr. Aldridge," Helva said.

In the drawing-room again, Lang maneuvered carefully to place himself near Conway, against the moment when the party should break into groups. He did get in a word or two, but then came Mrs. Cather, challenging her host to billiards, and Lang found himself presently alone with Mrs. Conway and her daughter.

"Edith's going to sing for us," said Mrs. Conway.

Lang summoned a smile, although he didn't feel like smiling. He was impatient to see Conway, and have the business over. How could Helva deliberately put his future in jeopardy by joining an upstart against the man who held the key to her husband's success?

And where was Helva now? It was irritating to have her slip away, awkward to be left as he was. And where was Aldridge? Aldridge ought to be listening to Edith Conway. The girl,

though certainly not beautiful, could smoothe the way for an impecunious young painter. Her voice, now that he heard it in song, was rather nice.

Lang sat by an open window leading out upon the topmost of the terraces, that went dropping off toward the Sound. The moon was so bright that even the small branches of leafless trees were visible. It made him think of another night—was it really ten years ago?—in front of Mrs. Norden's villa. Everything had looked white like that: the sand on the beach, the breakers, and the unreal, Moorish façade of the villa. Helva had been white. No, he could remember seeing that her hair, even in the moonlight, was gold, and that her eyes, bluer than the sea by day, needed no sun to show their depths.

And yet how different that other night! He had been saying good-by to Helva, a carefully restrained good-by. He had not been able to say the thing he had wanted to, because—well, in the first place, she was Mrs. Norden's niece, while he had been only Mrs. Norden's penniless protégé, going back to Paris on her bounty to paint cows drinking, and peasant women bending in the fields. He would have gone; that would have been the end; but Helva—she had sensed it all. How well he could remember even her words:

"Well, aren't you going to tell me?"

And his own answer, surprised out of him:

"But I am poor."

And her rejoinder:

"Not when you paint as you have painted."

She had meant the picture on the beach.

"All right, Lang. You ready?"

It was Conway's voice. It broke in gruffly on the enchanting song that Edith Conway sang, like the clash of brass on the faint strings of an orchestra.

Lang got up, blinking.

"We might as well go into the billiard room," said Conway. "We can be quiet there."

Where was Helva? Lang was conscious of the irrelevant question, as he followed Conway out of the moon-splashed shadows of the drawing-room into the harsh brilliance of the other apartment. "I think I must agree with Mr. Aldridge," her voice echoed persistently; and, further back: "Why don't you finish it?"—the picture showing Helva with the sea behind her, and the light of the bright day when he had begun to paint it.

"Well, Lang," said Conway—they were facing each other across a narrow hearth—"I suppose you know why I asked you here."

Lang nodded. There were only ashes on the hearth, and he was a little chilled. He ought to have an answer for Conway. It was stupid just to sit there and nod, with his whole career at stake. But the promise of riches, the success he had hoped for, was shot through with the prescience of some contrary desire.

"Well, how much do you want?" asked Conway.

The room seemed hardly real. Its garish light, Conway's heavy, material face in profile, the downright, unfaltering words, factual enough, were yet far off and unrelated to Lang. Perhaps it was because they fitted in so perfectly, as the happy end of his long striving, that they lacked conviction, that, conforming in every sensible particular, they had the tone of unreality.

But he named a sum. He named the top sum he had ever thought of. It sounded fictional, also. If the moment had been reality, Conway would have said it was too much.

Conway assented.

"Yes, I think you're worth it," said Conway. "I'll have the contract drawn and sent to you to sign. Let's call it settled."

Lang was glad when Conway left him. He wanted to find Helva, have her, somehow, confirm his happiness, now that what they'd striven for had come.

He sought her in the drawing-room. But she was not in there. Conway's growl and Mrs. Cather's low assent declared that they were alone in a far, dim corner of the shadowy room. Retreating into the hall, he found his way into the library, the music room, thence back into the billiard room. But she was not in any of the rooms.

Then he went upstairs to Helva's chamber. In the mirror of her dressing table he saw the frown of annoyance that drew itself in a fine line between his brows, now that he didn't know where else to look for her. Retracing his steps, he stood a moment in the hall and then stepped out onto the terrace.

For a little while he paced the terrace, smoking, but the voices in the drawing-room, Conway's and Mrs. Cather's, drove him to the sod. It was hardly decent of them to be sitting there in the twilight, talking in that tone.

He walked down to the gate till he could hear them no longer, then, seeing a summerhouse that promised a bench in the dark where he could sit and smoke, made toward it.

There were voices in the summerhouse. At first he thought they were only an illusion, or a sort of echo of the other voices in the drawing-room. But one of them was Helva's voice.

He walked faster toward her. He could hear her cadences, almost her words.

And then the other voice again. He knew it now. He struck a match. He let it flare at the tip of his already glowing cigarette, then tossed it toward the summerhouse in a wide and flaming arc. Fleeting it lit the boy's somber back, and Helva's bright hair.

"Oh, there you are," said Helva. "Did you want me?"

"No. I thought you were alone."

"Allow me," Aldridge begged.

Lang didn't speak until the boy was gone.

"Well, Conway wanted me," he said. He named the figure. In the dark he sensed her disappointment. "Isn't it enough?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. But have you signed with him?"

"I've given him my word."

"It's nice—the money," Helva said.

In the bright sun of Monday morning, which came through the skylight of Lang's studio, Helva, with one glove off, stood by the low table that served him for a desk, sorting out the mail into little piles. Setting his bag on the parquetry floor, Lang strode over to one of the Gothic windows, and stared up Central Park, waiting till she should be finished.

"Nothing of importance," Helva said at last. "Only the usual exhibits. Schoeninger's in June."

Somehow her voice sounded accusatory. Schoeninger's in June should mean something of importance.

"I believe I'll send him something," Lang said vaguely.

"What have you to send?" said Helva.

Lang looked about the room. There was the water-color girl in all her habiliments and poses. There was the cabinet with the ancient canvases neatly stacked on the shelves to gather dust. And there, on the easel, in the sunlight which affirmed the certainty of spring, compelling him to look at it, was the picture of Helva on the beach with the sea behind her.

"Well, I could send him that," said Lang.

"It isn't finished."

Lang walked the length of the room, so that he might look closely at the painting. No, it wasn't finished, but it might have been. Already captured was

the light that had been over the sea, the sweep of the wind in the clouds, almost the sound of the surf, and certainly the stirring rhythm of it all.

"But I could finish it," said Lang.

Helva was taking off her other glove. Regarding it absorbedly, she laid it beside its mate, and pulled the bell. The maid with the Parisian accent came, and took the bags.

"I'm going to finish it," said Lang. "This picture, here"—he raised his voice a little—"I'm going to finish it for Schoeninger."

"That's splendid, dear," said Helva. "Are you going to use the car this afternoon?"

Something tightened about his heart. Hadn't Helva wanted him to finish the picture? Only Thursday, hadn't she practically asked him to go on and finish it? Then what had happened to her since? Did she think he didn't mean to do it, even after he had told her? Surely she knew that he could finish it, now that material necessities no longer crowded upon his life.

"No, I shan't use the car," he said.

The brushes were of camel's hair. They were soft, and clean, and of various sizes, to be used according as the imperfections of the painting called for great, sweeping strokes or the smallest, deftest touches. The paints were of that consistency which is neither solid nor fluid. They would go on with a brush, or come off with a knife. But the old, familiar technique was become new, and strange.

For days he had been painting, and, that evening, he was very tired. His arm ached with the painstaking strokes. The cloud on which he had spent himself looked heavier and darker than its imperfect fellows he had painted long ago. Wherefore he gathered up hastily his tubes, and brushes, and the palette when he heard his wife's step in the hall. He would have liked to tell her

he was working on the picture, but the memory of her skeptic smile when he had told her he was going to finish it restrained him. He couldn't tell her till the picture came alive for him again, until the clouds should sail, and the combers thunder on the beach.

It was very late, although the mail was still unopened on the table. She came in, flushed and beautiful, sat down, began to slit the envelopes.

"Driving?" Lang said.

"Yes," she answered absently. "The woods in Westchester are lovely." There was silence punctuated by the sound of her paper knife. Had it been yesterday that Helva spoke of seeing the far side of Staten Island? "Aunt Katherine's opening her villa. She wants me to come to stay with her."

He watched her till she read the letter to the end.

"Well, are you going?"

She considered it. She asked him:

"Could you go on with your work?"

"My work?" he echoed, his heart beating fast. Then: "Oh, you mean the water colors."

"Yes. Of course."

"Yes, I can do the water colors. I have done them pretty often, haven't I?"

Lang read, in the letters Helva wrote him, that the sea in front of Mrs. Norden's villa was becoming bluer, the clouds over it lighter and higher. He could almost hear the combers, rhythmic of coming summer. His arm no longer ached; his fingers no longer hesitated; the old technique seemed to have come back to him. But the picture he was painting did not live. The old effect of light, the something he had painted on that far-gone day, eluded him.

Something had always intervened when he had tried to finish that picture: night first, night darkening the waters, actual and physical night that came, dimming the shine of her hair, and tak-

ing the blue out of her eyes; and then the myriad physical and material necessities, that crowded upon his life after he had married Helva, and taken her to live at the top of stairs in Washington Square South.

To begin with, there had been poverty. It seemed unreal, now, remote from his luxurious surroundings, and yet he had not forgotten those long, twisting stairs, with the plaster cracked and peeled off, and the bare, splintered floor of the room he had lived and worked in, and the iron grate never filled, and the evenings when he and Helva had failed to dine.

He had tried, in those days, to finish the picture, believing, in his youth, that posterity would remember him by it, naming him along with Titian and Rembrandt. Also he had painted Brooklyn Bridge at night, and misty sunsets over Jersey, and Italian women with babies. But he had starved until the day he laid his oils aside, and took up his water-color box, and painted Helva in the fashion that had made him famous everywhere.

He had never given up hope of really painting. But riches hadn't come at once, and, as they came, they, too, imposed necessities and obligations. There had been orders to be filled, disappointed advertisers to be placated. Always he had had to work. And there was nothing to regret. Had he not worked to purpose? The polished floor of this present studio with its ingenious parquetry, the leaded, Gothic windows with the stretch of Park below them and beyond them, the silken hangings, the deep rugs, the ivories and jades—all seemed to proclaim the rightness of the water-color girl.

And he could yet do the painting. He was sure of that. He only wanted Helva. He stopped, with his brush absurdly poised, listening for the pad of her sandaled feet, and the scratch of a match to light the samovar. The studio

without her was no place to paint that picture. He ought to have her there to help him; better yet, to have her stand for him down by the sea in front of Mrs. Norden's villa.

He wrote her he was coming. He hurried off his work to Conway. And next day he went. But, first, he found, on the topmost shelf of the old cabinet, the sketching kit of his student days. It had brass fastenings, and convenient little boards instead of canvases, and a collapsible tripod to hold the boards while he painted. He put it with his traveling bag aboard the Pullman, that would, by morning, carry him within the sound of the surf he was going to paint.

His Pullman was parked in a sunny station when he awoke, and looked out upon the familiar surroundings. It seemed unbelievable that he was really there. He put out his hand to touch the sketching kit. Yes, it was real enough. And soon he was putting it into a taxi, speaking Mrs. Norden's name. In palpitating eagerness he strained forward.

In a little while he would see Helva. Already he could see the ocean. It began under the loud rocks toward which the car was speeding, and slanted up to the rim of the sky. It was very blue in the morning sun—bluer than the sky.

The road ran along the top of cliffs until it reached a row of villas. Then it curved inland. It was about to leave the sea.

"Stop here a moment," Lang said. "I'll get out. You may take the bags on."

It wasn't any distance. He wanted to walk. He wanted to walk along the rim of the sea.

Stairs hewn out of the rock led him down to the sandy beach. It seemed only yesterday that he had walked with Helva there. The sound the surf made on the shingles, the feel of the wind

against his cheek, the crunching of the wet sand as he trudged along, affirmed the abiding changlessness of life.

It was fantastic to consider that his finishing the picture mattered vitally to Helva, and yet, somehow, he had to show her that he could go through with it, that he, like that boy for whom she had taken it out of the dark cabinet, could yet see the thing he had painted once. He could show her, now. He needed only her, the little kit—

Their boulder was ahead of him. The tide was low and the rock stood high out of the water. How well he could remember when they stopped there—was it really long ago?—while he had made his first sketch of her on one of the little boards, his finding that her eyes were the color of the sea far out beyond the combers, that her blowing hair had the vitality of sunlight.

He was walking past the boulder, looking seaward, when the toe of his shoe, crunching the sand, struck an object which he stooped to pick up. Idly for a moment he held it—a little board, thin, rectangular, and rough with the sand that clung to it.

It had a reminiscent feel. To shake off the sand he knocked it against his knuckle, then flicked it with his handkerchief. He stared at it. Ten years on the beach? Fantastic thought—yet, there was Helva, painted on the board, Helva standing beside the boulder with the sea behind her, and airy clouds that went sailing across the sky.

It was reminiscent—yes—but it was also new, and strange, and different. It was not his. It called up images and echoes, but they, too, were blotting, drowning. Only faintly, like a distant sound, could he hear the surf on the shingles at his feet, and, like something dreamed, ahead of him see the unreal façade of Mrs. Norden's Moorish villa.

Lang stumbled on, still staring at the picture. The thing looked crude, at first. But was it only young, and bold? Somehow it had caught the light that had been over the sea, and the colors of the bright day. Somehow the hand that wrought it had done the thing that Lang had come here hoping to do. And it was not Lang's hand. The name of Aldridge was lettered flauntingly at Helva's painted feet.

Mrs. Norden's butler handed him the letter Helva had left for him that morning, before she drove away with Aldridge. Back in the studio that afternoon, Lang read it over as he sat beside the low table that served him for a desk. Picking up the telephone receiver, he gave a number, waited a moment, spoke.

"Ship news?" he said, and then: "The *Paris*—has she sailed?"

Putting the receiver back on the hook, he walked along the parqueted floor to the easel, lifted the unfinished picture from it, locked the painting in the old cabinet, then, going to one of the Gothic windows, flung the key.

He stood there, by the window, staring up the vast distance of Central Park.



SIR JOHN ROBINSON, the South African millionaire, decided to dispose of his large collection of paintings because he candidly wished to be relieved of its care. Most of the pictures were stored in his London home unhung, and some he had never seen. When the collection was put on view at Christie's fashionable society flocked to see it, and the newspapers gave such an enthusiastic description of it that the owner's curiosity was aroused. When he went to view the collection he grew quite as enthusiastic as the critics, and immediately ordered the whole lot withdrawn from the sale. The collection includes rare paintings by Hals, Romney, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Velasquez, Gainsborough, and Jan Steen.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

NO one who sees Booth Tarkington's latest comedy, "Tweedles," will ever again be able to listen to discussions of family lineage without tucking his tongue into his cheek. With a proud, but poor, New England family, a wealthy and arrogant Philadelphia family, and some old Bristol glass as the chief ingredients, Tarkington has with almost fragile delicacy mixed a subtle concoction which warms the cockles of one's heart as one savors of it. For, on the one hand, is pride of family, propped up and bolstered by enormous wealth; on the other, rugged pride of lineage and the uncertain income derived from shopkeeping. And the latter triumphs, as it should in a conventionally happy-ending play.

SLIGHT as is the main thread of the narrative, the theme one can mull over endlessly. In the present day wealth and family background have become in the minds of most interchangeable—neither a qualification to be spurned utterly, but the one readily sacrificed for the other, however.

WITH her customary deftness Beatrice Ravenel has written a powerful novelette for the November number around this question of wealth versus family integrity. Agatha Wayne, wealthy society woman, had always basked serenely in the sense of well-being which comes of social security and impeccable financial status. Then, literally out of the blue, came the man who threatened the structure not only of her wealth, but of her hitherto unimpeachable family. Something she must do. And after the manner of desperate women the world over she contemplated various methods of "eliminating" Fernando, but lacked ever the courage to try the means she so cunningly devised.

YOU will find Mrs. Ravenel's novelette, "The Elimination of Fernando," one of the most startlingly original stories you have ever read. Tremendous in its essential story,

dramatic in its development, the author here achieves the high-water mark in longer fiction.

ONE of the most amusing aspects of modern marriage is the division of the glory which accrues to one or the other of the parties concerned. In the very prevalent cases where either one is a so-called professional, the possibilities, as the well-known advertising man said, are enormous. The husband of one Hilda Twardowski, opera singer, was merely that and nothing more, it appeared to the pitying eyes of those who beheld him. And when her star began quite visibly to decline in the operatic heavens there were those whose hearts were wrung by the poignant grief of the adoring husband. One case-hardened critic, though, knew an incipient failure when he saw it, and his opening gun in the campaign against the singer boomed loudly. And then one day, in the grill of a smart hotel, he heard the story of Hilda from her worshiping husband's faltering lips. In "The Husband of Hilda Twardowski" Stanley Olmsted has written one of the biggest stories of his career. Big, perhaps, because it runs the gamut of human emotions, but big, too, because it has the most utterly original and mirth-provoking twist at the end that fiction writer ever hit upon. Watch for this wholly delightful tale.

IN the November number, also, you will find another of Warren E. Schutt's charming stories of the diplomatic circle in Paris, called this time "Julietta, Traitress." With, as usual, an absorbing plot and ingenious insight into the human heart, this, his newest story, ranks easily with those of Mr. Schutt's former AINSLEE's stories which have been so popular.

THE foregoing are but a few of the stories of distinction which make up the November AINSLEE's. There are others equally distinctive.

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- 1—Letters must be written in the English language, and on only one side of the paper.
- 2—The competitor's name and address must be written at the top of the first page of the letter.
- 3—The letter must be mailed in a sealed, stamped envelope. *No post cards will be considered.*
- 4—There shall be no limits to the length a letter may be; and any competitor may send in as many letters as desired.
- 5—This Contest shall be freely open to anyone, anywhere.
- 6—The first prize will be awarded to the contestant whose letter on the subject, "Nothing Takes the Place of Leather," is the best in the opinion of the judges.
- 7—The Contest opens officially June 30, 1923, and closes October 31, 1923.
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Seven perfectly cut, blue white Diamonds are so closely set in Platinum, and so exquisite is the workmanship that the solitaire resemblance is actually startling. Looks like a large single Diamond. Don't send us a penny—we'll send the Ring without a penny in advance. If satisfied, pay \$2.00, then send the balance in ten months \$5.50 a month. If not satisfied return.

FREE

De Luxe Diamond Book showing over 2,500 Bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry—ten months to pay on everything. Write to Dept. 183-B.

THE HOUSE OF QUALITY
CAPITAL \$1,000,000.

L.W. SWEET INC.

1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

If You Were Dying To-night

and I offered you something that would give you ten years more to live, would you take it? You'd grab it. Well fellows, I've got it, but don't wait till you're dying or it won't do you a bit of good. It will then be too late. Right now is the time. To-morrow or any day, some disease will get you and if you have not equipped yourself to fight it off, you're gone. I don't claim to cure disease. I am not a medical doctor, but I'll put you in such condition that the doctor will starve to death waiting for you to take sick. Can you imagine a mosquito trying to bite a brick wall? A fine chance.

A Re-built Man

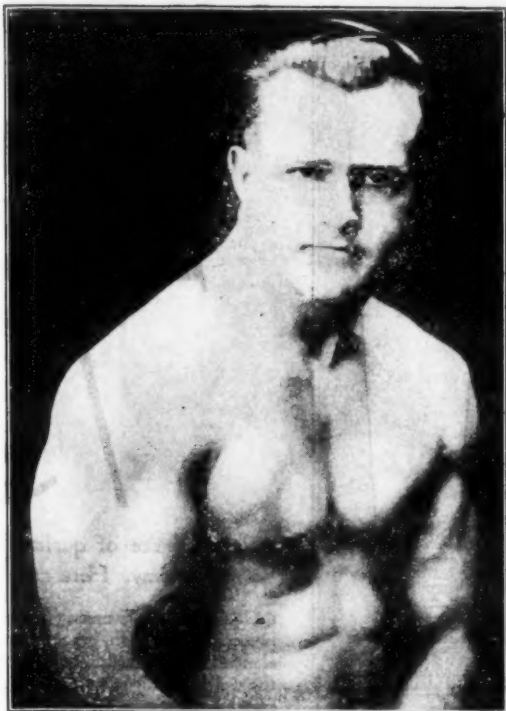
I like to get the weak ones. I delight in getting hold of a man who has been turned down as hopeless by others. It's easy enough to finish a task that's more than half done. But give me the weak, sickly chap, and watch him grow stronger. That's what I like. It's fun to me because I know I can do it and I like to give the other fellow the laugh. I don't just give you a veneer of muscle that looks good to others. I work on you both inside and out. I not only put big, massive arms and legs on you, but I build up those inner muscles that surround your vital organs. The kind that give you real pep and energy, the kind that fire you with ambition and the courage to tackle anything set before you.

All I Ask Is Ninety Days

Who says it takes years to get in shape? Show me the man who makes any such claims and I'll make him eat his words. I'll put one full inch on your arm in just 30 days. Yes, and two full inches on your chest in the same length of time. Meanwhile, I'm putting life and pep into your old hack-bone. And from then on, just watch 'em grow. At the end of thirty days you won't know yourself. Your whole body will take on an entirely different appearance. But you've only started. Now comes the real work. I've only built my foundation. I want just 60 days more (and in all) and you'll make those friends of yours who think they're strong look like something the cat dragged in.

A Real Man

When I'm through with you, you're a real man. The kind that can prove it. You will be able to do things that you had thought impossible. And the beauty of it is you keep on going. Your deep full chest breathes it rich pure air, stimulating your blood and making you just bubble over with vim and vitality. Your huge square shoulders and your massive muscular arms have that craving for the exercise of a regular he-man. You have the flash to your eye and the pep to your step that will make you admired and sought after in both the business and social world. This is no idle prattle, fellows. If you doubt me, make me prove it. Go ahead. I like it. I have already done this for thousands of others and my records are unchallenged. What I have done for them, I will do for you. Come then, for time flies and every day counts. Let this very day be the beginning of new life to you.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

Send for my New 64-page book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains dozens and dozens of full-page photographs of both myself and my numerous pupils. Also full description of my wonderful offer to you. This book is bound to interest you and thrill you. It will be an impetus—an inspiration to every red-blooded man. I could easily collect a big price for a book of this kind but as others are now doing, but I want every man and boy who is interested to just send the attached coupon and he is his absolutely free. All I ask you to cover is the price of wrapping and postage—10 cents. Remember this does not obligate you in any way. I want you to have it. So it's yours to keep. Now don't delay one minute—this may be the turning point in your life to-day. So tear off the coupon and mail at once while it is on your mind.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5010, 305 Broadway, New York

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN,

Dept. 5010, 305 Broadway, N. Y. City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

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Introducing the New Aluminum EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT

Complete, ready for use with two EVEREADY
Unit Cell Batteries and EVEREADY Mazda Lamp

75 Cents

A masterpiece of quality, broad, practical utility, and utmost economy. Here are six outstanding points of merit:

QUALITY: Of Eveready Standard, possessing the high-grade, practical elements of the flashlight that made the word, *flashlight*, part of our language, and the name, *Eveready*, signify the perfection of handy, portable light. Same batteries, same electric lamp as in higher priced Eveready Flashlights.

SIMPLICITY: Minimum number of parts in a flashlight. Just 4 in all. 1 aluminum case; 1 aluminum reflector head; 1 Eveready Mazda lamp; 1 small piece of rubber.

DURABILITY: A rugged flashlight. The sturdy aluminum case, and fewness and simplicity of the parts safeguard it against accidents. No delicate parts to break. Nothing to get out of order.

CONVENIENCE: Light, slender, short, it fits comfortably into a pocket, and slips easily in and out of it. Requires little space in automobile pocket, traveling bag or camping kit.

HANDY OPERATION: Just turn the head to turn the light on or off. No switch or button to press. A hole in the end prevents sticking or jamming of the batteries.

ECONOMY: The rock-bottom price for a practical high-grade flashlight. Nothing compares with it. Think of it, complete, ready for use with Eveready Mazda lamp and 2 Unit Cell Batteries, 75c. In smaller size, 65c. Step in at once at the first Eveready dealer's, and inspect the Eveready Aluminum Flashlight.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, Inc.

There are 60,000 Eveready dealers trained to deliver Eveready Service with the sale of Eveready Flashlights and Eveready Unit Cell Batteries at electrical, hardware, drug, sporting goods, and general stores, garages and auto accessory shops.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



In treating sprains

It is important that the blood should be kept circulating freely through the injured part — otherwise it may be left permanently stiff and lame.

Apply Sloan's generously. No rubbing is necessary. It sends an increased blood supply straight to the spot. The throbbing ache is relieved, the swelling and inflammation reduced. Get a bottle of Sloan's today and have it on hand—35 cents at all druggists. *It will not stain.*

Sloan's Liniment *kills pain!*



No More Dull, Heavy EYES

If your EYES are tired, dull, heavy — use Murine. This harmless lotion soothes away redness and leaves the eyes bright and clear. Use after business, reading, sewing, motoring and all outdoor sports.

Write Murine Company, Dept. 61, Chicago, for FREE Eye Care Book

MURINE
FOR YOUR EYES

Widely Used Since 1889

Ladies Let Cuticura Keep Your Skin Fresh and Young

Soap, Ointment, Talcum, 25c. everywhere. For sample address: Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden, Mass.



"Delicious!"

It just melts in your mouth!

You're sure to like that

"Good old licorice flavor!"

Black Jack

Chewing Gum



American
Chicle Co.

Shawknit

TRADE MARK
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

WILL hosiery which looks well in the store look equally well after laundering? Will it fit snugly around the ankles? Is the price right?

These are a few practical hosiery questions which a man may answer satisfactorily for himself by saying Shawknit to the store salesman.

SHAW STOCKING CO.
Lowell, Mass.

FINE
HOSIERY

**Only \$1000 to \$3000
Starts You in Business**

We want a few men who have made good—to take charge of our distributing branches, to direct the men already at work, hire others, and fill orders quickly. We make the nationally advertised

AIR-GAGE Inner Tubes

Air Gauge in valve stem of each tube shows pressure at a glance. Sells on sight to car owners. Agents make big money. 4000 at work. If you can qualify as Branch Distributor, write at once and we will arrange for you to come to factory at our expense. Then you can decide. M. W. McConnell, President.

PAUL RUBBER CO., 77 Paul Heights, Salisbury, N.C.

14-KT GOLD FILLED 5% 14-KT WHITE GOLD FILLED 75%

Save 1/2

Buy direct from the manufacturers and save one-half. Your choice of either high-grade watch. Octagon or round case. 4-Kt. gold-filled 20 yr. case with 20-yr. gold-filled link bracelet, full jewel. Gold dial. Stem wind and set. Adjusted and guaranteed. \$15 value, our price **ONLY \$7.50 prepaid**. Tuxedo shape, 14-Kt. White gold-filled 20 yr. case. 200 gold-grade elites, gold-filled clasp. Beautiful white dial. Sapphire crystal. 5 jewels. Lap-locked, adjusted. Fully guaranteed. \$15 value. Our special price **ONLY \$7.50 prepaid**. Order today. Send no money. Pay on arrival. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded promptly.


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**The Hand That Rocks The Cradle
Can Also Swing The Brush**

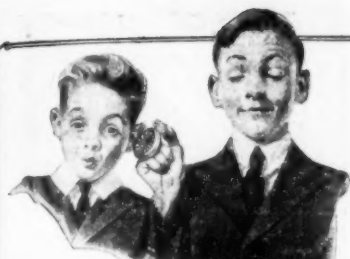
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BRUSHES**

Insure even tempers on odd jobs.

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Brush Manufacturers for Over 114 Years and the
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Has an Ingersoll
Coming to Him**

CARRIED by tens of millions of men and boys, respected the world over for time-keeping dependability and sturdy construction, honored as a great American institution: Ingersoll Watches are the watches for boys.



Models \$200 to \$1000

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Reliable Watches at Low Prices



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Spur Tie

Pat. June 13, 1922 - Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

ALL TIED FOR YOU

FASHION says, "The Bow—for fall and winter." Select your Spur Tie—today! Stylish—and different! Comes all tied for you by hand. Two sizes—many patterns. An exclusive patented feature prevents curling, rolling or wrinkling. Insist on the genuine. Look for the name Spur on the tie

Write for Style Book C

HEWES & POTTER, Boston, Mass.

Makers of BULL-DOG

Suspenders and Garters, guaranteed for 365 days' wear. Bull-Dog Belts—Vestoff Suspenders—Spur Tie Four-In-Hands.



**Don't have sore throat
again this winter**

As you know, many illnesses start with sore throat. The mouth is the open door to disease germs.

So, particularly at this time of year and, in fact, all winter, it is wise to use Listerine systematically.

For half a century this unusual preparation has been recognized and recommended by physicians as the safe household antiseptic. It will help you and your family ward off many throat troubles that so often anticipate more serious ills.

Simply use it as a mouth wash and gargle; it is pleasant and it will put you on the safe side.

Also, it combats halitosis

Listerine has, moreover, the ability to overcome halitosis (the medical term for unpleasant breath). When you use Listerine systematically, you know your breath is right.—Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.

LISTERINE
— the safe
antiseptic



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I Have Found Out How to Get Rid of Superfluous Hair At Once

Here's the Secret

I had become utterly discouraged with a heavy growth of hair on my face and lip. I had tried every sort of depilatory and electrolysis and even a razor. But I couldn't get rid of it.

Then I made a wonderful discovery. I found a simple method by which I removed the hair at once and most wonderful to relate, it keeps the hair removed. My face is now as smooth as a baby's, not only free from superfluous hair but from pimples and blemishes. I have explained this discovery to thousands of women who have had the same experience with it that I had and I will explain it to you if you also have superfluous hair. It isn't like anything you have ever used. It is not a powder, paste, wax or liquid, not a razor, not electricity. It causes no itching or burning and leaves no scars. As easy to use as your comb or brush.

Send for Free Book

A book that tells just how this wonderful method gets rid of superfluous hair is free upon request. Don't send a penny—just a letter or post card. Address: Annette Lanzetta, Dept. 626, Care Hygienic Laboratories, 204 E. Peoria Street, Chicago, Ill.

6⁸⁰



Save 1/2

20-YR. 14KT GOLD-
FILLED CASE

Buy this high-grade watch direct from the manufacturers and save one-half, 12 size, thin model, 20-yr. 14kt. gold-filled case. Beautiful dial. Handsomely chased border and back. Full jewel, well known ALERT movement. Regulated and adjusted to keep excellent time.

Order today. Send no money. Pay only \$6.80 on arrival. \$15 value. Satisfaction guaranteed or money back.

FREE: 14kt. gold-filled Waldemar chain and knife if you order now.

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\$2.00

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32x3 1/2	2.10	.90	34x4 1/2	4.00	1.75
32x4	2.75	1.00	34x4 1/2	4.25	1.85
32x4 1/2	2.80	1.00	36x4 1/2	4.25	1.85
32x4 1/2	3.25	1.40	36x4 1/2	4.25	1.85
34x4	3.50	1.40	37x3	4.25	1.85

SEND ONLY \$1.00 for each tire shipped. Balance C.O.D. Express shipments sent section wrapped for inspection. Tires guaranteed eight months. Another tire given at half price for any net perfect satisfactory. Dealers and Agents wanted everywhere. Write—Write Chicago.

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Mandolin, Mandola, Mando-Cello, Guitar, Tenor-Banjo, Mandolin-Banjo, Cello-Banjo, Guitar-Banjo, Harp-Guitar, Mando-Bass

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Select your Gibson now. You soon be playing the music of the day. Your friends will be surprised and delightfully entertained. Let us help you organize a Gibson Orchestra in your community. You can increase your popularity, income and pleasure by playing for Concerts, Entertainments, Church Affairs, etc. A small down payment and then \$5 a month will soon pay for a Gibson and will furnish you with wholesale, year-round entertainment. If you have an old instrument we will make liberal allowance on a Gibson. Write for Free Book, Catalog, Free Trial Offer, information about Win. P. Gibson, Jr. and Instrument you prefer.

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Adjusted to the Second—Temperature—Ischronism—Positions—21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels—Cased in a 25 year Gold Strata Case. Only \$1 down. Write today for free book to

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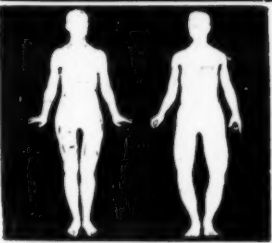
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is now more than ever the key-note of success. **New-Legged and Knock-Kneed** men and women, both young and old, will be glad to hear that I have now ready for market my new appliance, which will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently without pain, operation or discomfort. Will not interfere with your daily work, being worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitener," Model 15-17, S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will save you soon from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent.

Write today for my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct bow and knock-kneed legs without any obligation on your part. Enclose a dime for postage.

M. TRILETY, SPECIALIST

602 L. Ackerman Building BIRCHAMTON, N. Y.

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Foot and Leg Pains Go in 10 Minutes

This New Way Absolutely Guaranteed

We guarantee to stop any foot or leg pains, due to arch weakness, in 10 minutes. Costs you nothing if we fail. This offers you a test without risk or obligation.

New Scientific Principles

Science discovered the cause of weak arches. A group of muscles, in the front of the foot, weakened by strain, cause nine out of ten cases of tired, aching or burning feet. After five years of experimenting we found the way to take the strain off this group of muscles with a light, super-elastic bandage-like brace. You wear it, and like magic, the pains vanish. No more metal plates, stiff arch props, or bungle-some pads. Just a little band of webbing that slips on and off as easily as a garter. The secret is in the tension and stretch; contour and design.

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If you have pains in the toes, instep, arch, heel or ankle; aches in calf, knee or thigh, cramped toes, callouses or other ills caused by weak arches, try a Jung Arch Brace. Go to your shoe dealer, druggist or chiroprapist and be fitted. If he hasn't them write to us.

With a strip of paper, 1/4 inch wide, measure around the smallest part of the instep, just back of the toe joints, where the forward end of the brace is shown in illustration above.

Mail us this measurement and coupon below. When you receive the package pay the postman \$1 and postage. Or if you send \$1 we will prepay postage. If not relieved in ten days your money back. You assume no risk.

Ask for Free Book—Ask for our book on troubles of the feet and their correction. It is free. Illustrated with X-Ray views.

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Canadian Office—(Kirkham & Roberts, Mgrs.)
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Canadian Price, \$1.00

Send No Money

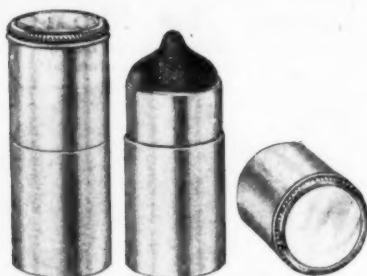
THE JUNG ARCH BRACE CO.

9103 Jung Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio

Please send me a pair of Jung Arch Braces. I enclose foot measurements. On receipt of package I will pay the postman \$1 and postage, my money to be refunded if not satisfied.

Name:
Address:
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I wear size shoe width or last
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Jasmynette Lip Stick



Actual Size

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The Jasmynette Lip Stick is the latest Parisian novelty, 18 kt. gold-plated container with mirror. Easily and inexpensively refilled—a handsome and handy article for "My Lady Beautiful." Will last a life time. Three shades, light, medium and indelible.

The Jasmynette Lip Stick will be sent post-paid to any address on receipt of \$1.00. Please mention shade desired.

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Outfit, Complete**

—then just \$10.00 per month for 10 months! **Lyon & Healy Inspiration Saxophone**, finest made, same as used by Benson Victor Artist Orchestra, Paul Hesse, other famous artists; in perfect tune; has all latest improvements, easy action, beautiful finish. Outfit includes fine plush lined Kerasol Case, Lyre Mouthpiece, Carrying Strap, Self-Instructor.

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I'll show you how—in your spare time. Be a
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Skin afflictions
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Sciatica
Muscular
and nervous
disorders

* our informative booklet, Doctor Sun, shows the wide and effective uses for Stein-O-Lite—send for it!

"That's it, mother.
Ah, that feels good!"

Now this famous health light of Science can serve you at home!

IN recent years physicians have accomplished marvelous results with the Stein-O-Lite Therapeutic Lamp in the treatment of rheumatic, neuralgic, skin and even wasting diseases.

How Stein-O-Lite heals and mends

The Stein-O-Lite floods the area of pain with light rays warm and golden as tropical sunshine. Their dry, benevolent heat draws gently but quickly armies of healthy, fighting blood corpuscles from deeper tissues to the tender spot. Held in the pain area by heat and light as though by a magnet, these fresh armies of blood corpuscles commence at once the job of arresting, correcting and healing the cause of disorder.

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As simple to operate as an electric iron.

No professional ability is required. Simply attach the Stein-O-Lite plug to any light socket—it's ready for work. Press the switch—and you have the pain-soothing golden rays! Works effectively on either alternating or direct current up to 120 volts.

Why Stein-O-Lite is Safe for the Home



Stein-O-Lite rays are distributed evenly—no scorching point.



Other lamps—a focusing or "burning" point.



MAIL THIS COUPON

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Guarantee: enclosing \$25 for a Stein-O-Lite with the understanding that I will return it and my money refunded, if I am not satisfied.

Name _____ Address _____

NOTE: If you desire the Stein-O-Lite sent C. O. D., check here with pen and ink. ☐

Free Book

Containing complete story of the origin and history of that wonderful instrument—the

SAXOPHONE

This book tells you when to use Saxophone—singly, in quartettes, in sextettes, or in regular band; how to play from cello parts in orchestra and many other things you would like to know. The Saxophone is the easiest of all wind instruments to play. You can learn to play the scale in an hour and soon be playing popular airs. It will double your income, your pleasure and your popularity. Nothing can take the place of the Saxophone for

Home Entertainment, Church, Lodge or School, or for Orchestra Dance Music. Six days free trial of any Guescher Grand Saxophone, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone or other instrument. Easy terms of payment arranged. ☐ (4)

Everything in Band and Orchestra Instruments
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The very things you need now. Latest styles. Factory-to-Family low prices. Save big money. Furnish a room or whole home. As little as \$3 down; a year or more to pay. Also Pianos, Players, Phonographs. Cut out this adv.—Write TODAY for new Fall "Larkin Book of Better Homes".

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Dept. 101

BUFFALO, N.Y. Peoria, Ill. Chicago, Ill.



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Say "Bayer" and Insist!



Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

Colds
Toothache
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Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

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BROS. & CO. ESTD 1858

Genuine DIAMONDS

Guaranteed

Cash or Credit

Blue White Brilliant, Perfect Cut Diamond. Marvellous Value at \$50, \$75, \$100, \$125 and up

Wrist Watch

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Stores in Leading Cities



She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet, exercise or unpleasant greases and salves. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used **Marmola Prescription Tablets**, which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that **Marmola Prescription Tablets** give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell **Marmola Prescription Tablets** at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY

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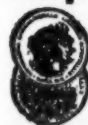
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BUBBLING OVER WITH SCREEN NEWS

Stop Using a Truss



STUART'S FLAPAS-PAPS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or springs attached—cannot slip, do not chafe or press against the public bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.



Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Flapas absolutely **FREE**. Write name on Coupon and send **TODAY.**

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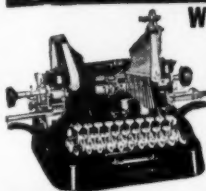
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By Oliver Typewriter Co.



While They Last
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Rebuilt like new, right
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Never before an offer like this, and probably never again! Only the great Oliver Company itself could do it. Famous Model No. 9 Oliver at the slashed price of only \$44.50—and a year to pay! Genuine No. 9 Oliver with standard keyboard and all late improvements, rebuilt throughout in our own factory. The equal—yes the superior, we say, of any \$100 typewriter on the market. And yours for only \$44.50 on this special sale of 1,000 machines.

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Act quick before the 1,000 machines are gone. Try, however before you buy. We give you 5 days free trial. Return or keep the Oliver at you decide. No cost to you whatever for the free trial. A year to pay if you buy. Write today for full particulars of this sale. Mail coupon or postal.

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Please send me full particulars of
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"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old.

The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Write for Free Booklet containing testimonials of users all over the country. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 755, 26 S. 15 St., Phila



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DIAMOND**

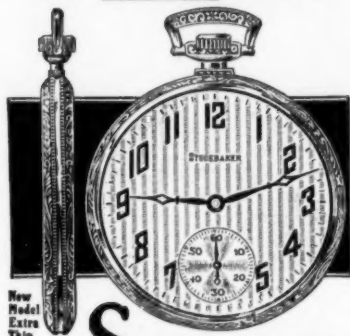
Easy for you to own this beautiful ring or give it as a present. Simply send \$5—we will send the ring.

10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL
Wear it 10 days and if you don't agree it is an amazing bargain, return it and we will refund your money. If satisfied, pay \$1.50 a week until \$52.50 is paid.

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Only \$1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studenbaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 54 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—direct from the maker at lowest prices ever named on equal quality.

Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

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For a limited time we are giving away FREE with every Studenbaker Watch a beautiful pattern Studenbaker Watch Chain. Write now while offer lasts.

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Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studenbaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studenbaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

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Please send us your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your \$1.00 down offer.

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The Unknown Seven

By HARRY COVERDALE

INTRODUCING to the American reading public a new criminologist who is destined, by reason of the author's skill at character delineation, to become as famous as Sherlock Homes.

This seems rather a broad and sweeping statement on the part of the publishers of the book, but we feel certain that all those who prefer a good detective story to any other form of reading, will agree with us.

Kingdon Cole is the name of this new character. The author has succeeded in drawing a word picture of a man of great mental energy and compelling personality. He is forced to match wits with a gang of high-class, scientific criminals headed by a most capable professor named Carmody.

Cole is quite a "different" detective. He is a student and a follower in the footsteps of Lombroso, Pinel, and Pritchard. He is the author of several books on crime and criminals. In fact, he is just the sort of a man to cope with an unusually interesting situation, fraught with danger to a big city full of people.

Price, \$1.75 net

CHELSEA HOUSE, Publishers

79 Seventh Avenue :: :: New York City

Would You Like To Lose a Pound a Day? Then Try This Delightfully Simple Way---



Thousands
Are Now
Finding It
Easy To Have
the Slim,
Trim Figure
Dictated By
Fashion and
Admired
By All.

ARE you fat? You shouldn't be. Without rigorous dieting or exercise—by a simple natural process—you should quickly and easily be able to have the slender fashionable figure that is so attractive.

Scientists have discovered that excess fat is often caused by the abnormal action of a small gland. Once this gland is healthy and functioning properly, your weight should reduce naturally and without effort on your part, to the normal amount for your height. And science has discovered a simple extract which tends to regulate the gland that controls fat. Without lifting a hand in unnecessary and violent exercise, you should find it a delightfully simple matter to have the ideal, slender figure admired by everyone. The wonderful thing about the scientific formula known as Rid-O-Fat is that in losing your superfluous fat you should gain added vigor, health and energy of mind and body.

Feel Young—Look Young

There is nothing which adds to a person's age so much as fat. A few extra pounds makes any man or woman look from five to ten years older. Not only that, the excess weight and increased heart action saps vitality and energy.

Once the gland which controls your fat is functioning properly your food should be turned into firm, solid flesh and muscle. As your weight comes down to normal you should experience a delightful and amazing improvement in your appearance. You should not only feel and look younger—you should actually be younger. You should also be in better health—a real health of energy—not the fictitious and deceiving health of fat that insurance companies say shortens the life ten years.

Complexion, health and figure are improved at the same time. The result is new vitality, magnetism and personal charm that makes for success. Thanks once hard become easy and life worth while.

Science Discloses Method of Quickly Reducing Excess Weight—Many Losing a Pound a Day Without Starvation Dieting or Exercise—Greatly Improves Appearance. Generous Sample Sent Free.

Quick Results—Rid-O-Fat, the scientific compound, comes in convenient tablet form, and **No Exercise**—is practically tasteless. You simply take one at each meal and bedtime. **No Starvation Dieting**—Results often surprising in their rapidity.

Within a few days you should be conscious of a new feeling of energy and lightness, taking the place of that tired, worn-out feeling.

Quickly as the fat gland resumes normal functioning you should lose weight in a healthy, normal manner. Many fat, ungainly figures are in this scientific manner helped to regain their normal and idealistic proportions, giving that fashionable slenderness and athletic poise.

And all this time you live as you please. Nature is doing the work. No more irksome exercise—no more denying yourself of all the things you like. Take just one small, pleasant Rid-O-Fat tablet after each meal. Could anything be more simple?

Rid-O-Fat Used By 100,000 People

Since the announcement of the wonderful Rid-O-Fat formula it has been used by more than 100,000 people. Twenty to thirty thousand more people are writing for it every month. The following letters show what users think of the scientific Rid-O-Fat system of fat reduction:

Lost Forty-One Pounds in Thirty Days

"When I wrote for your Rid-O-Fat sample I weighed 215 pounds. Today, which is 30 days later, I weighed only 204 pounds. A reduction of 41 pounds in a month. I am delighted. Please send another 30-day treatment, as I want to reduce to 145 pounds, which is the correct weight for my height. I am sure that I will realize my ambition with Rid-O-Fat and I feel better than I have in years."

Lost Twenty Pounds in Three Weeks

"According to weight tables I weighed exactly 20 pounds too much. Rid-O-Fat reduced me to normal in just a little more than three weeks. I feel better, don't get tired, and my friends say I look like a new person."

Generous Sample FREE

I want every fat person to have a chance to try Rid-O-Fat in their own homes at my expense. I don't want them to take my word or that of the thousands who have used it. I want them to see for themselves that the results are more pleasing than anything I can say. To introduce Rid-O-Fat in a million more homes I will send a free sample to anyone who will write for it. In fact it is really more than a sample, as it is sufficient to reduce the average person several pounds. I will also send with the sample an interesting booklet that explains the scientific reason for fat, and why Rid-O-Fat meets with the highest approval.

Costs Nothing!

Don't send a penny—I will send the sample and the booklet under plain wrapper and fully postpaid. This does not obligate you in any way and is never to cost you a cent. It is simply a limited offer I am making to more generally introduce Rid-O-Fat.

This free offer is good for only a short time, so send me your name and address on the coupon below or a post card, and I will see that the generous sample and booklet are mailed immediately under plain wrapper postpaid. Do not try to get Rid-O-Fat at drug stores as it is distributed only direct from my laboratory to you—remember this is a short time offer and send your name at once. H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories, 1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories,
1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

Without obligation in any way and with the understanding it is not to cost me a cent at any time, please send me your generous free sample of Rid-O-Fat and free booklet under plain wrapper.

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*When the Touch of a Match
Brings Exquisite Fragrance*

PURITY, sweetness and greater luxury for the home. These are a few of the benefits of Temple of Allah Incense, in the new Oriental odor, *Wistaria*, or the rich *Sandalwood* scent.

Compounded of the finest East Indian sandalwood and Florentine orris root, this rarely choice incense is even used as a sachet by fastidious women. It sweetens the air and keeps away flies and other pests.

Package of incense thirty-five cents. Only sixty cents for combination set with richly embossed metal burner and package of incense. De Luxe set with large metal burner and incense, \$1.

Order through your druggist, department store or send \$1.00 for De Luxe set. Sent to any part of the United States post paid.

JAMES DRUG COMPANY, 172 Fifth Ave., New York

CHEMISTS AND PERFUMERS SINCE 1882

**TEMPLE of ALLAH
INCENSE**

*The Daughters of Kings
Would Have Burned It.*



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FAIRY SOAP



*Change today to
the Fairy way!*

IT'S all in the way you begin the day! Refresh and invigorate the skin with Fairy Soap and you start with the confidence that ultimate cleanliness gives.

Fragrant lather of shimmering white! Joy-lather, in a minute, that gently

probes the pores and expels impurities.

Just soap! Pure—wholesome soap. White all through—the age-old symbol of purity.

And the oval cake! The handy cake! Wears to a wafer without a break. Economical, of course!

It's white! It's pure! It floats!

THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY



HINDS HONEY AND ALMOND CREAM is a soothing, refining cream that by daily use prevents any tendency to roughness or irritation. An invigorating cream that tones and freshens and protects the complexion from injury by dusty winds or chilly atmosphere. A cream that softens the skin to a velvety texture. And withal a cream so simple to apply, so sure in its improving results that it readily becomes the favored complexion cream of all who try it. Its economy is due to the small amount required—only enough to moisten the skin. Let the use of Hinds Honey and Almond Cream become a part of your daily program. It will enhance your pleasure.

All drug and department stores sell Hinds Honey and Almond Cream. We will mail a sample for 2 cents or a trial bottle for 6 cents. A try-out box of 5 samples, assorted, 10 cents. Booklet Free.

A. S. HINDS CO.

Dept. 50

PORTLAND, MAINE

THE IDEAL BASE FOR POWDER. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is an excellent base for face powder. Apply just enough cream to the skin to moisten it. Allow it to nearly dry and then dust on the powder which is sure to cling. All unpleasant, sore conditions caused by wind and dust, especially while motoring, will be avoided by the combination of Hinds Cream and Hinds Cre-mis Face Powder. This powder comes in four tints—white, flesh, pink and brunette. Samples 2 cents, trial box 15 cents, large box 60 cents.

FOR HOSPITAL AND THE SICK ROOM. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is in constant use by surgeons and nurses who not only use it to keep their own skin soft and smooth but use it on their patients. The skin is apt to become dry and sore after long and severe illness and Hinds Honey and Almond Cream quickly restores the natural texture of the skin without making it oily, greasy or sticky.

FOR MANICURING—WITHOUT SORENESS. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is now highly recommended as an aid in manicuring because it so agreeably softens the cuticle for removal and prevents soreness; also, as it adds to the luster of the nails. Altogether, it is a success for the entire manicuring process.